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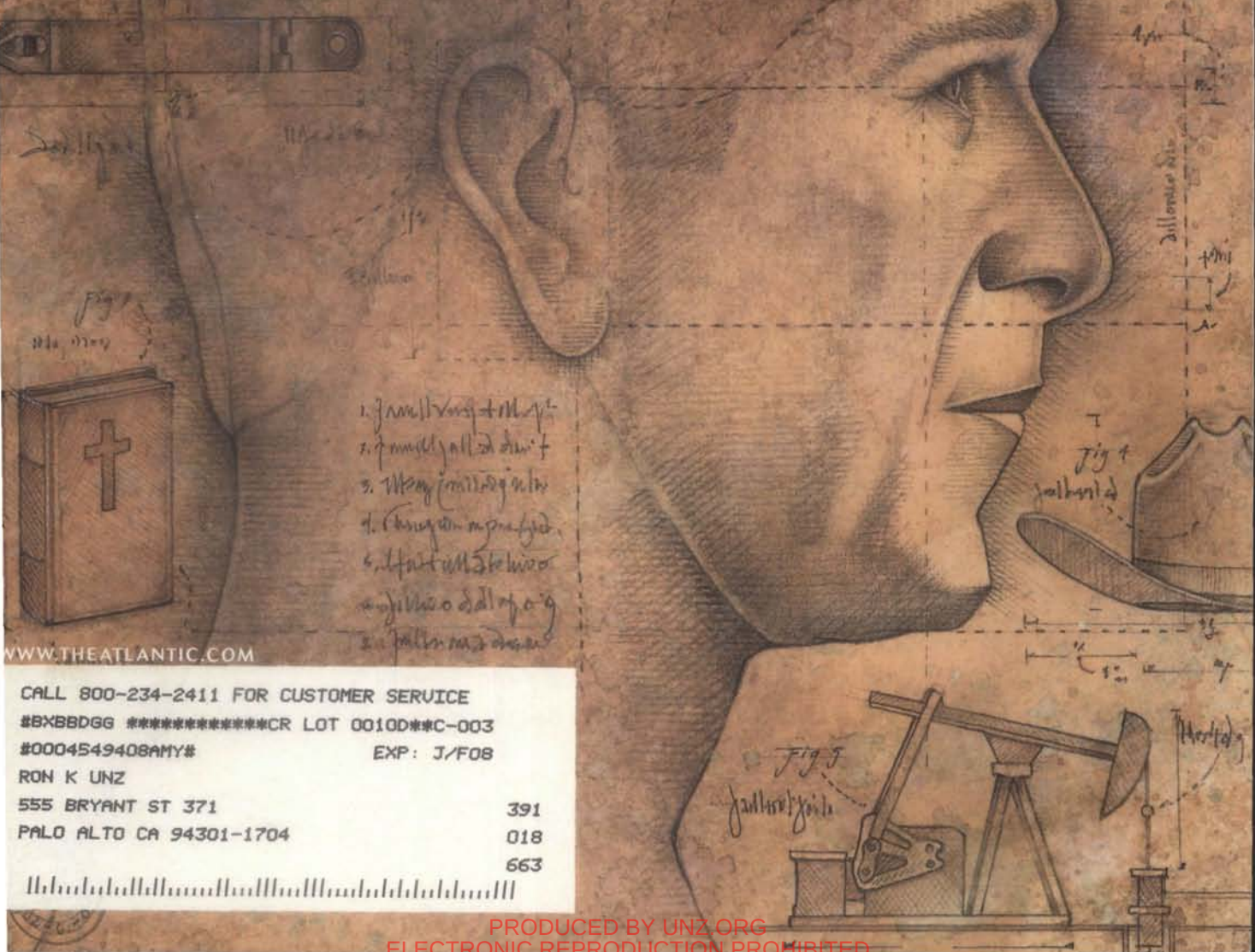
APRIL 2003

MONTHLY

The Mind of George W. Bush

*His father lacked "the vision thing."
Does the son have
"the imagination thing"?*

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER



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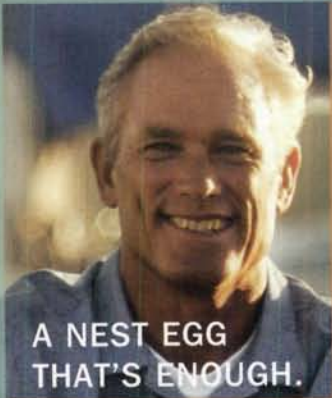
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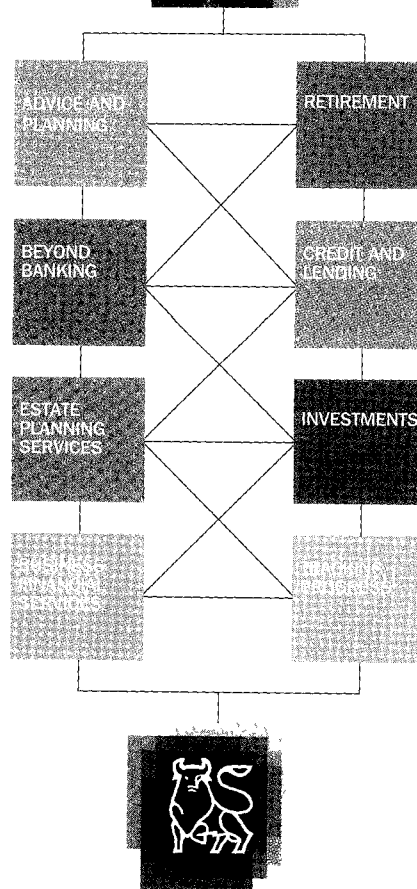
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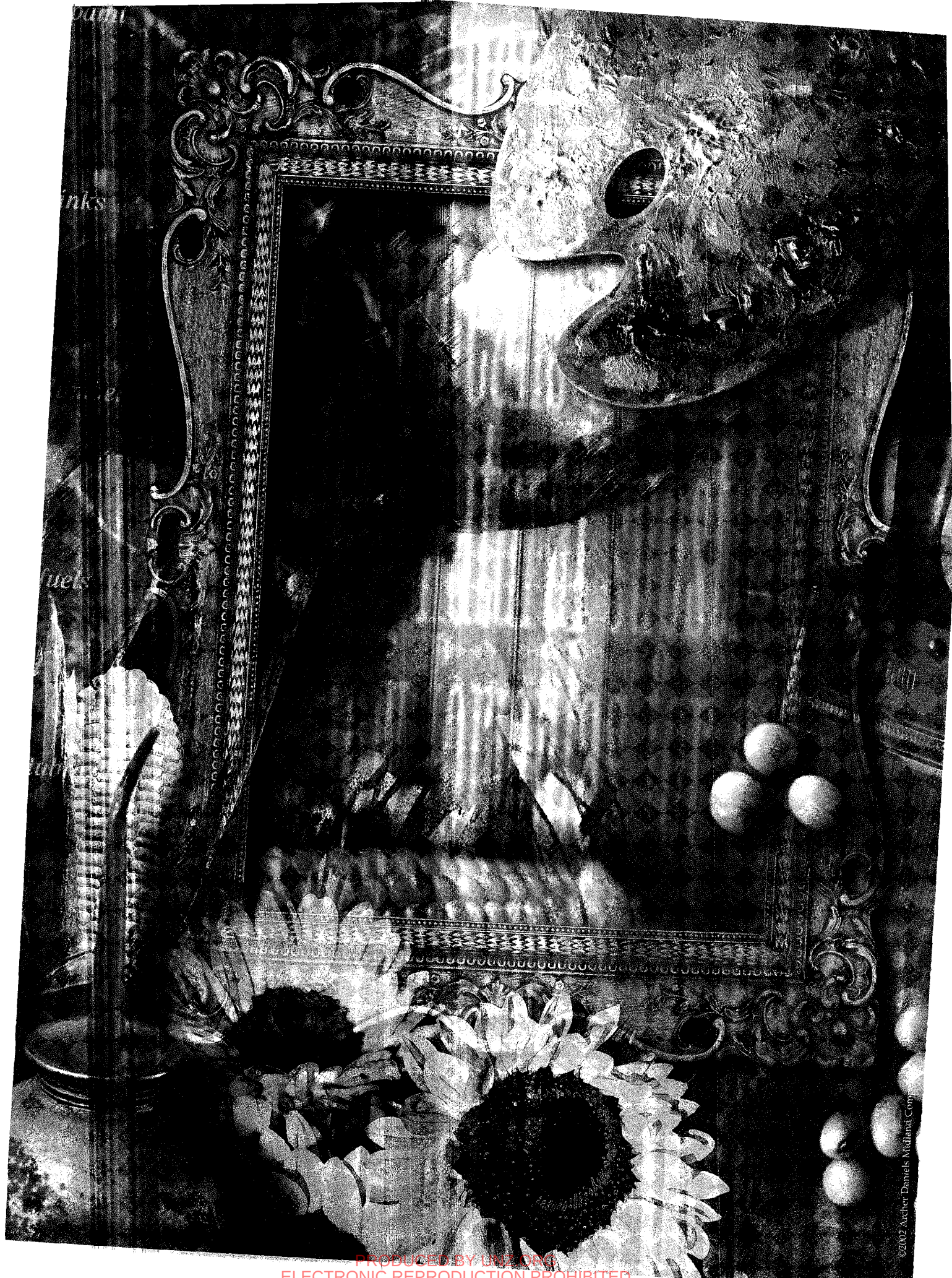
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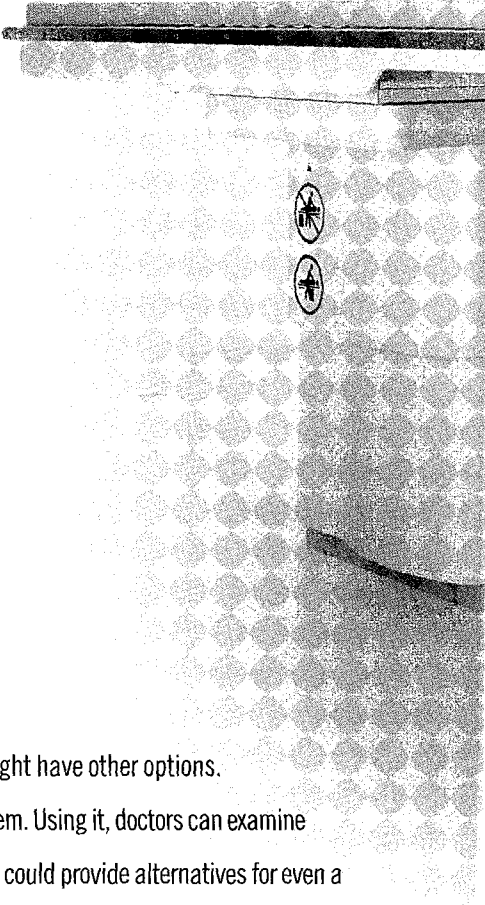


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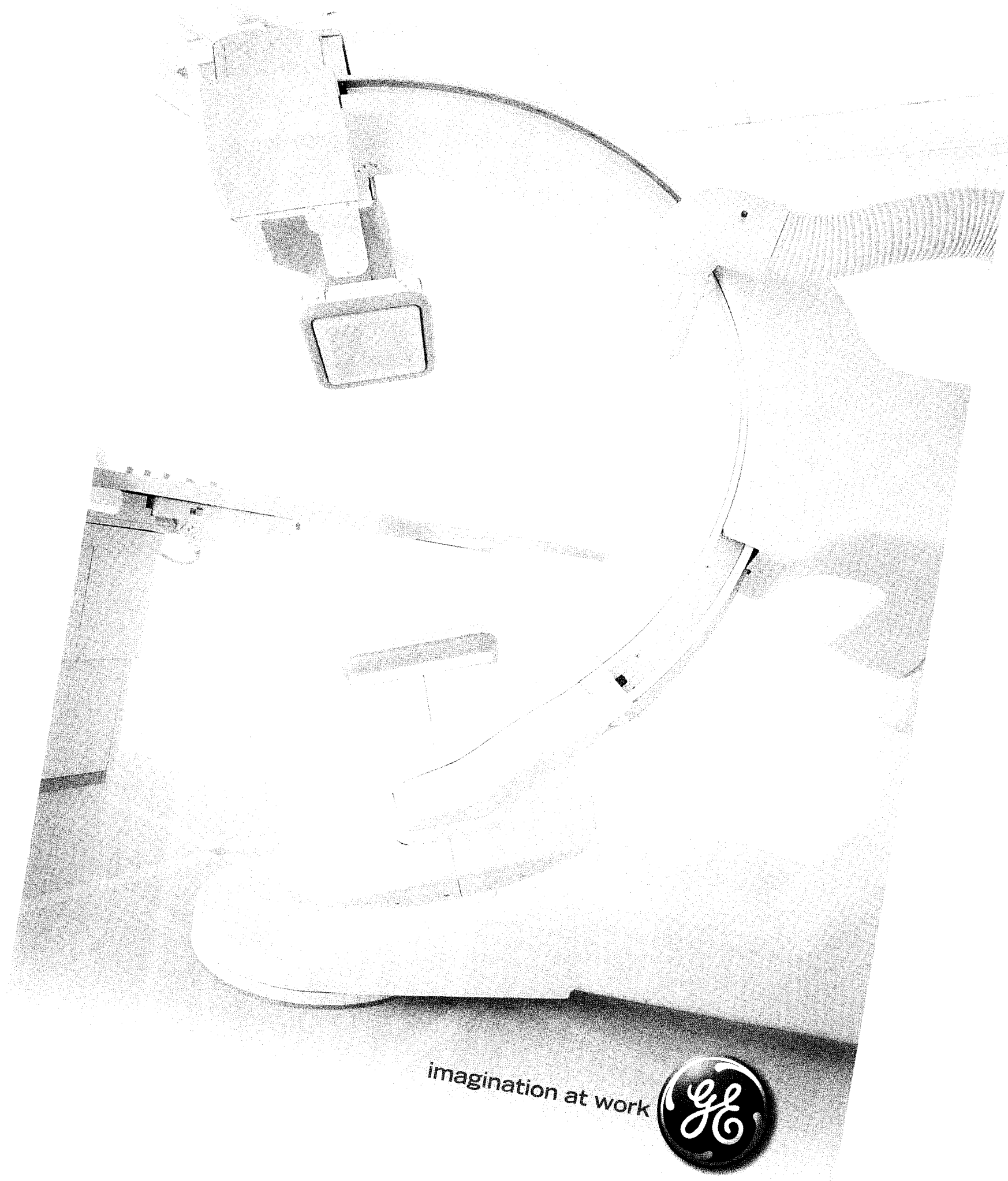
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This month on the Web . . .

Interview: Richard Brookhiser
Richard Brookhiser discusses "The Mind of George W. Bush," his article in this issue.

Politics & Prospects: A Column by Jack Beatty
A monthly column on newly published books and political and cultural trends by one of *The Atlantic's* senior editors.

Interview: Stephen Schwartz
Schwartz talks about his book *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror*, discussed by Christopher Hitchens in "Holy Writ."

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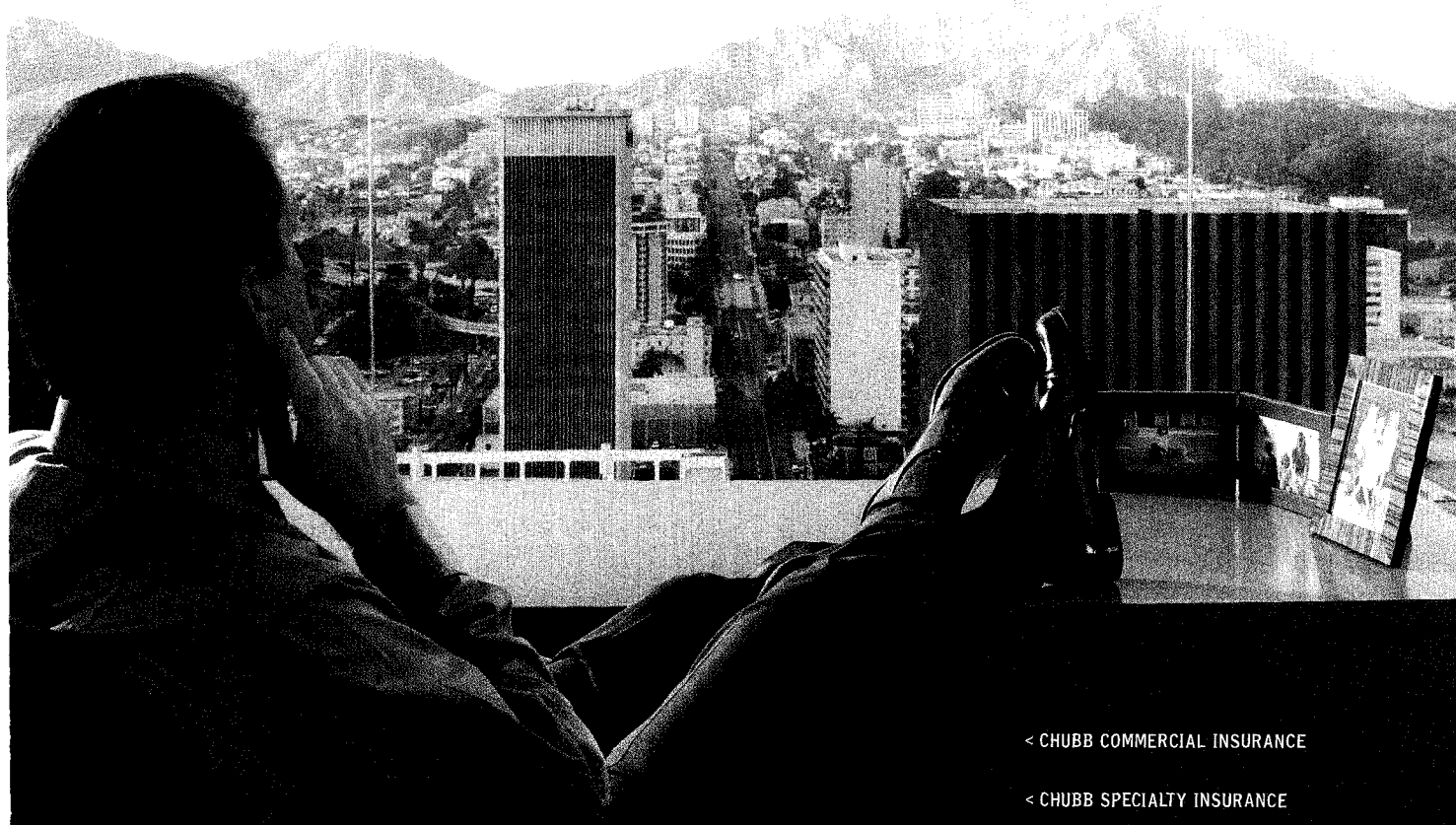
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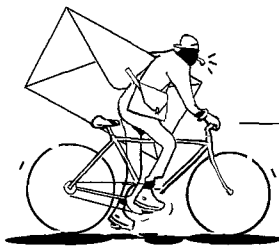


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JFK's Medical Ordeals

Robert Dallek's article "The Medical Ordeals of JFK" (December *Atlantic*) is erroneous in a few areas. Kennedy did have a problem with chronic back pain, for which he had had surgery. He was treated in the Neurosurgical Department here at the Lahey Clinic, and the possibility of further surgery was raised in 1954. I had been at the Lahey Clinic for two years, and I clearly recall seeing the senator hobbling around on crutches, referred from neurosurgery to the Orthopedic Department, where conservative measures, including exercises and swimming, were advised.

The surgeons who saw him did not go to Cape Cod, as Dallek states. Nor did they suggest, as Dallek implies, that without surgery Kennedy might "lose his ability to walk." Such a profoundly untrue statement would never be made, even if spinal fusion was to be considered. The idea that he had "compression fractures" in his lower spine is also incorrect. There was undoubtedly some narrowing of the spinal disc space where surgery had been done previously, and it was because of this, not compression fractures, that spinal fusion must have been advised and carried out in New York a few months later.

Dallek's description of the devastating, almost fatal postoperative complication is accurate. The subsequent story of JFK's disabling back problem is indeed a tribute to his courage and determination. His condition following such spinal surgery is still amazing today. As Dallek points out, JFK endured a range of ineffective and ruinous procedures, as well as the many drugs prescribed, until he came under the care of Dr. Hans Kraus, whose advice—exercise, swimming, and physical therapy—resulted in significant improvement.

Charles A. Fager
Chairman Emeritus Neurosurgery
Lahey Clinic
Burlington, Mass.

Robert Dallek's medical history of John F. Kennedy supports an observation I have made repeatedly during more than thirty years as an orthopedic surgeon: celebrities rarely get good medical treatment. Most physicians, like most people, fear public failure. They tend to avoid a risky decision even if it is the best alternative. They also call in many consultants, and the consultants tend to be eminent and are rarely challenged. The result is medicine practiced by committee, each member of which is fearful of being wrong, and no member of which is likely to challenge another.

Jack C. Childers Jr.
Lutherville, Md.

President Kennedy was in a disease state we now classify as spondyloarthropathy. The genetic linkage of this category is well described in the medical literature as the haplotype of HLA-B27. The cluster of symptoms described by Professor Dallek as afflicting the former President include the likelihood of inflammatory bowel disease, Reiter's syndrome (urethritis, conjunctivitis, and arthritis), and ankylosing spondylitis, all of which fit into the spondyloarthropathy category. (The probability of the genetic linkage was recently made clearer to me when I had the opportunity to hold an outside door to the Senate building for JFK's brother Ted. His former height has given way to a stooping back, typical for the latter stages of this malady.)

Justus Fiechtner
Associate Professor of Medicine
and Osteopathy
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Mich.

Robert Dallek presents us with evidence that JFK suffered greatly from medical disorders, chiefly colitis, spinal fractures from osteoporosis, and

Addison's disease. Dallek does not attempt to classify JFK's colitis, but does refer to "wrestling" with "spastic colon" and, in an *Atlantic* Unbound interview, to "spastic colitis." The latter is an old term now generally subsumed under the name irritable bowel syndrome. IBS is a functional bowel disorder. It is extremely common. It is distressing. And its manifestations are at their worst when a person is under stress. On the basis of the evidence presented, I doubt that JFK suffered from IBS. An inflammatory bowel disorder is a more likely explanation, given the severity of his symptoms and his associated conditions. I think JFK suffered from celiac disease (gluten-sensitive enteropathy), a disorder in which sensitivity to ingested gluten, most commonly from wheat or rye, results in destruction of the lining of the small intestine. This typically produces symptoms of malabsorption and malnutrition. In support of this hypothesis I offer the following observations: 1. Celiac disease has a higher incidence among the Irish than in any other population (one in 300). 2. The malabsorption of calcium and vitamin D results in osteoporosis; a recent study in North America found osteoporosis of the lumbar spine in 38 percent of patients with celiac disease. 3. Celiac disease is associated with Addison's disease (screening for celiac disease is now recommended for patients with Addison's disease). 4. Celiac disease is associated with sacroiliitis and liver dysfunction, both of which were referred to or implied in Dallek's article. Although other inflammatory bowel disorders (Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis) would explain some of these findings, they would have been easily diagnosed. Even now celiac disease is often not considered in the evaluation of patients with intestinal symptoms, and goes undiagnosed. If JFK is shown to have had celiac disease, people suffering

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from this highly treatable condition may get the attention they deserve.

*Reuben Falkoff
San Diego, Calif.*

Robert Dallek gives a startling revelation of JFK's health. Kennedy's primary illness was clearly inflammatory bowel disease, probably Crohn's disease. The onset is typically in the patient's second decade. All the other ailments were probably iatrogenic, including the Addison's disease and the collapsed vertebrae (osteoporosis). In defense of his physicians, especially early on, it should be noted that Crohn's paper describing the disease was not published until 1932 and probably was not widely appreciated for at least a decade.

The urethritis and prostatitis were more likely related to Kennedy's sexual dalliances. It is possible that he also had Reiter's syndrome (urethritis, arthritis).

The sad fact remains that unwarranted therapies caused him severe and unremitting pain and suffering.

*Fred Pipkin
Louisville, Ky.*

I read about JFK and his physicians Janet Travell and Hans Kraus with considerable interest, but both got a bum rap in Robert Dallek's article. Travell was criticized, and Kraus was stuck on the end of the story like a postage stamp. I write this in their defense. Both were my mentors. Both taught me well. Both helped me physically, and I knew each professionally and as a good friend.

I met Dr. Kraus in 1936, and became his rock-climbing partner in 1941 and his research assistant in 1954. His series of back-limbering exercises helped me avoid surgery on my back following a very bad ski accident in which I broke my pelvis in four places. The Kraus-Weber test for minimum muscular fitness, and our authorship of subsequent medical papers, took us to Dwight Eisenhower's White House to relate our findings on the un-fitness of American children and to launch fitness awareness in this country.

I met Dr. Travell in 1969, when I was trying to avoid a hip replacement relating back to the ski injury mentioned previously. Although she was unable to save the hip with injections similar to

those given to JFK, she *was* able, with many injections over a period of six months, to make me more comfortable while I was waiting for the newly designed hip operation that she insisted I have. Her bedside manner was superb. I had been in a great deal of pain for years, and was under a lot of stress when I came to her. She put me in a JFK rocker with my feet up, wrapped me in a shawl, and talked to me in soothing tones. I immediately felt better and cared for. This must have been what JFK felt. To claim that she was kept on at the White House for fear she would "talk" is, I think, unfair. In all the years I knew Dr. Travell, never once—in our correspondence, phone conversations, or prolonged visits at my home in Stockbridge, Massachusetts—did she mention any difficulties at the White House.

*Bonnie Prudden
Tucson, Ariz.*

Robert Dallek replies:

Contrary to Charles Fager's recollections, Rose Kennedy remembered the Lahey physicians' visiting the Cape and encouraging JFK's fears about his future ability to walk without surgery. As for the absence of compression fractures, according to Dr. Jeffrey Kelman, x-rays for January 9, January 22, and October 13, 1954, in the records we studied at the JFK Library, suggest otherwise. Perhaps some of the discrepancies Dr. Fager describes could be cleared up if the Lahey Clinic opened its JFK medical records for study by future biographers. The alternative diagnoses suggested by other writers are certainly plausible, and I discuss these in my forthcoming book. As for Janet Travell and Hans Kraus, Bonnie Prudden's personal experience is no substitute for what the records in the library show.

Bobby Fischer

Rene Chun's description of the decline into paranoia (whether clinical or not) of Bobby Fischer ("Bobby Fischer's Pathetic Endgame," December *Atlantic*) offers a deeply saddening coda to Marjorie Garber's analysis of "genius" in the same issue. Unfortunately, Chun's discussion of Fischer's chess career contains several inaccuracies.

The "Game of the Century," played by Fischer against Donald Byrne in 1956,

did indeed garner great admiration. However, the British master David Levy observed that the game's fame was caused by the youth of its winner, and that "had it been played in the Barnet league between two sixty-year-old men it is doubtful whether it would have been considered worthy of publication." The Brilliancy Prize that the game won was only for the best game of the tournament and not an annual award, and the exclamation mark is a standard annotation of a good move, not (as Chun implies) an extremely rare addendum to a commentary.

Chun goes on to criticize modern chess for the incredible level of preparation put in by top players that makes "the first twenty moves unfold like a stale sitcom plot." But he fails to note that Fischer himself, more than any other person, was responsible for this development. Fischer's chess monomania led to his victory over the Hungarian grandmaster Istvan Bilek in 1962, when Bilek used up his allotted two and a half hours of thinking time and thereby forfeited, having made only twenty-seven of the required forty moves. Fischer used exactly two minutes for the whole game, simply because he had prepared it all at home. Fischer's ascendance to the throne demonstrated to the chess world that a contender had to be a full-time competitor.

Chun's description of the Reykjavik match against Boris Spassky is intriguing. He correctly notes Fischer's superlative comeback from his poor start, but makes the rather odd claim that Fischer's play grew stronger throughout the match while Spassky "began ... to crack." This corresponds neither to the factual record (Spassky lost only one of the final eight games) nor to the subjective consensus on the match, which is that Spassky, but not Fischer, played his best chess during these games.

Bobby Fischer is clearly not an admirable human being, and many chess players find that this taints the beauty of his games. Nevertheless, they deserve to be accurately described.

*Matt Guthrie
Phoenix, Ariz.*

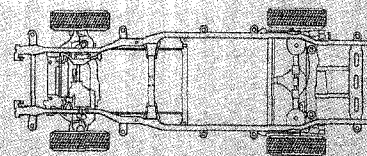
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laughed at by pretty much every serious chess player in the world. Even at his absolute peak Fischer was not nearly as great as Garry Kasparov, and probably not as good as Anatoli Karpov either.

Joshua B. Lilly
Martinsville, Va.

Bobby Fischer's former Hungarian girlfriend, Zita Rajcsanyi, may well have written a book about her relationship with the former chess champion, as reported by Rene Chun in the December *Atlantic*. If so, that would make two such books, because an earlier girlfriend, the German Petra Dautov, also wrote and published a memoir of her time with Fischer. I wonder if Chun mistakenly attributed Dautov's work to Rajcsanyi?

Robert Muscant
Norwalk, Conn.

Rene Chun replies:

The Brilliancy Prize was awarded for the best game of the tournament and is not, as Matt Guthrie notes, an annual prize. My mistake. I also regret making an error concerning the use of exclamation points in chess analysis. The exclamation point is standard annotation for a good move. Although Bobby Fischer obviously put an emphasis on studying opening theory, he was by no means the pioneer in that field. The Soviets made it a science long before Fischer came on the scene. Fischer just put in more hours. As for Boris Spassky's succumbing to the pressure of the Reykjavik match, this much is known: After the eighth game Spassky "sensed" that Bobby was hypnotizing him. After the fourteenth game Spassky called a meeting with his entourage of advisers and announced, "An attempt is being made to control my mind!" After the fifteenth game Spassky accused Fischer of using electronic devices and chemical substances to make him "lose [his] fighting spirit." Spassky's camp then insisted that the playing hall be searched for hidden electronic devices. "Spassky's snapped!" The New York Times wrote. "Now they're both crazy!"

By the standard of longevity alone, an argument could be made for Garry Kasparov's being the greatest chess player ever. But without Bobby Fischer there would be no million-dollar purses or televised matches. And victory in the 1972 world-championship match alone earns Fischer the title "greatest." This is not purely an American bias. When

the international magazine Chess Informant asked its readers to pick the best chess player of the twentieth century, Robert James Fischer came out on top. Even Kasparov has called him "the greatest world champion."

Petra Dautov was indeed the woman who published a memoir chronicling her relationship with Bobby Fischer. I stand corrected.

Our Genius Problem

Since reading Marjorie Garber's "Our Genius Problem" (December *Atlantic*), I have repeatedly encountered other references to "genius"—in *Time* magazine, in a concert program, in the newspaper. But I noted as well the genius in the layout of your December issue: Garber's piece (wherein she refers to "the Repository for Germinal Choice—the 'genius' sperm bank founded in Escondido, California, by the eyeglass millionaire Robert Klark Graham") is immediately followed by Jessica Cohen's "Grade A: The Market for a Yale Woman's Eggs." The centerpiece is Rene Chun's portrait of the flawed character of Bobby Fischer, the chess genius. David Brooks's "Light Shows of the Mind," in *The Agenda*, prepares us for Garber's views by saying that "Einstein was right when he said imagination is more important than knowledge." Finally, a subtle touch appears on page 147, in a review of John Updike's new novel: "Hope muses about her distant, Protestant God and ruminates about the role of the wife of a genius."

Patrick Ivers
Laramie, Wyo.

Marjorie Garber characterizes the IQ as an American invention. The IQ did become extraordinarily popular in the United States, but it was not Lewis Terman or any other American who invented it—it was William Stern (1871–1938), a German psychologist known for his work on differential psychology, who in 1912 first suggested dividing mental age by chronological age; he called this ratio the "intelligence quotient." In 1916 Terman adapted Stern's ratio, multiplying it by 100 to remove the decimal point, and abbreviated the term as IQ.

Nicole B. Barenbaum
Sewanee, Tenn.

The missing factor in genius that I found missing from Marjorie Garber's essay is one of sex. The vast majority of people labeled with the word "genius" are men. Even today one has only to troll the pages of book reviews to find young male writers labeled as "geniuses"; it's a term not often applied to women authors. And Garber's female example, Gertrude Stein, called herself a genius.

Although the MacArthur Foundation awards some of its genius grants to women, I cannot remember the last time a woman in our culture was crowned with such a laurel.

Lorraine Berry
Ithaca, N.Y.

Interracial Intimacy

Randall Kennedy's December article on the pace of and obstacles to black-white relations ("Interracial Intimacy") rings true. One unfortunate deduction to be drawn from this piece, however, is that the balkanization of the races is deeply entrenched, militating against integration at all levels as well as implying that separation should be maintained as the social norm.

This is in sharp contrast to the pattern in societies such as Canada and the United Kingdom, where, as recent studies have noted, intermarriage between blacks and whites is both more favorably viewed and more often practiced. In fact, blacks in Britain are marrying whites at four to five times the rate seen in America. The proportion of black men and black women entering into these unions is approximately the same, suggesting little of the black resistance underscored by Kennedy in the American experience. One reason given for this phenomenal difference is that British blacks, particularly in metropolitan London, do not tend to segregate themselves from whites. Another factor may be the early (1830) abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire, without a civil war. The "War to Free the Slaves" has left a bitter legacy that, despite the recent economic progress of blacks, tends to endure and to color relationships at many levels in the United States.

Harold S. Fleming
Great Falls, Va.

Certain well-off black males do tend to see white females as the third leg of the stool of visible worldly success, but the fact that white males marry black females in such small numbers is, to my mind, a much more interesting—and disturbing—topic.

White women bemoan the lack of suitable marriage partners to the same degree that black women do, though without much statistical support for their position. Yet with 25 percent of black males under the control of the criminal-justice system, and with college participation and graduation rates far higher among black females than among black males, educated black females have a legitimate complaint about the lack of compatible marriage partners. This theme is a constant in various forms of popular literature directed at African-American readers.

Why, given the availability of large numbers of educated and successful black women, do so few white males cross the color line to date and marry them?

*Denton Taylor
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

One of the most fascinating pieces of information in Randall Kennedy's look at interracial relationships concerns Amiri Baraka, the former LeRoi Jones. That New Jersey's poet laureate, who famously denounced the "4,000 Israelis" supposedly forewarned to stay away from the World Trade Center on 9/11, was once married to a Jewish woman is truly staggering. On second thought, perhaps it is no more staggering than Bobby Fischer's becoming a paranoid crackpot who abominates his heritage, adores Hitler, and spews the most odious brand of anti-Semitism. Baraka and Fischer: divided by color and culture but united by hatred for something familiar to them both.

*Mindy Alter
Toronto, Canada*

I was amused to come across my name in Randall Kennedy's fine essay on interracial marriages. Regrettably, some blacks and whites still think they have a right to an opinion about someone else's choice of a marriage partner.

A month to the day before he was assassinated, Malcolm X appeared on the Pierre Breton show, on CFIO-TV in Toronto, Canada, and was asked by Breton if he was still opposed "to integration and to intermarriage." Malcolm responded, "I believe in recognizing every human being as a human being—neither white, black, brown, or red; and when you are dealing with humanity as a family, there's no question of integration or intermarriage. It's just one human being marrying another human being, or one human being living around and with another human being." (Quoted in *Malcolm X Speaks*, 1966.)

Sadly, many blacks and whites have yet to grasp the simple truth in Malcolm's words.

*Julius Lester
Belchertown, Mass.*

The World in Numbers

This may be the most pedantic letter I've ever written, but ... the World in Numbers map in the December issue

July 18, 2006

Zoomi Danlami, 4, died of being born in the wrong place. Because of poverty, malnutrition and poor medical conditions, Zoomi didn't have a chance. She is survived by her mother, who was powerless to help her, and by all of us who could have helped prevent her demise.

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where the end
of poverty begins

is color-coded by country, and Sardinia and Corsica are colored differently from Italy and France, to which they respectively belong. The same is true for Kangaroo Island—a speck off the southern coast of Australia.

Jonathan Kulick
Los Angeles, Calif.

What is bigger than Wyoming, more populous than Ireland, has English as an official language (like *The Atlantic*), lies 1,200 nautical miles east of Australia, and seems to have no hope of ever appearing on your world map?

Todd Kriebel
Wellington, New Zealand

Early Admissions

Congratulations to James Fallows for influencing a change in early-admissions policy at Yale with his September 2001 article “The Early-Decision Racket.” One thing I have never understood, however, is why students agree to the “binding” nature of early admission. Can one be penalized for accepting admission to a university and later changing one’s mind?

I recall receiving early admission to a university and later enrolling in a different institution. I never heard from the university that offered me early admission. I can only assume that students who believe they are bound to attend the university that offers early admission have been fooled into this agreement.

Steven Knowlton
Ypsilanti, Mich.

James Fallows replies:

To qualify for early-decision plans, students must “agree” to attend the college if accepted—but there’s no systematic penalty or enforcement if they renege. In theory, high school counselors are not supposed to send out transcripts to other colleges once a student has been accepted on a “binding” plan. Many colleges share lists of those they have accepted on a binding basis—and other colleges are free to tear up applications from those already accepted elsewhere. Sometimes it happens; sometimes, as Steven Knowlton found out, it does not.

Movie Presidents

I never thought that I would have a chance to correct a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, but David M. Kennedy (*The Agenda*: “Ranking the Movie Presidents,” November *Atlantic*) is mistaken when he identifies Tom Beck, the fictional character played by Morgan Freeman in *Deep Impact*, as “the first African-American President.”

The first African-American President of the United States was Douglas Dillman, played by James Earl Jones in the 1972 movie *The Man*. Wait a minute: do dream sequences count? In that case the first African-American President (admittedly below the constitutionally mandated minimum age) was the title character in the 1933 movie musical *Rufus Jones for President*, played by a tap-dancing seven-year-old named Sammy Davis Jr. F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre
Glasgow, Scotland

I am outraged by the ranking of the movie Presidents by your so-called panel of experts. There can be no doubt that Jeff Bridges (in *The Contender*) stands head and shoulders above all the other movie Presidents. It is unforgivable that he was not even mentioned.

Nobody on your list comes close to matching his profound humor and humanity. And certainly nobody on your list can match his eloquence. (Morgan Freeman, himself seriously underrated, comes closest but still lags far behind.)

Andrew Eisner
New York, N.Y.

Advice & Consent

What an honor it was to have my article quoted by Jonathan Rauch in his recent *Agenda* column “The Fat Tax” (December *Atlantic*). An underground publication appreciates nothing more than a mainstream magazine’s taking notice of it. However, I have to disagree with Rauch’s assessment that the article contained “a hint of snobbery” in its reference to America’s increasingly obese population. The facts are the facts, and we are not being snobbish to insist that Americans, despite all

that is known about the dangers of an improper diet and extra weight, have created an epidemic of obesity.

Ken Wohlrob
Editor
Bully Magazine
Brooklyn, N.Y.

I was surprised to learn from Christopher Hitchens’s article on Tom Stoppard’s play *The Coast of Utopia* and its central character, Alexander Herzen (“A Nine-Hour Resurrection,” December *Atlantic*), that my book on the latter is “highly controversial.” I had assumed that my forty-odd-year-old *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism* had been safely filed away as a staple of nineteenth-century Russian intellectual history.

Hitchens misunderstands the book. The sentence he cites—noting the paradox that in Russia socialism originated among the gentry, not among spokesmen for the proletariat—was not the expression of a “materialist view” of Herzen’s ideas but the opposite: a way of explaining his socialism not on the usual basis of class but as the product of moral and intellectual concerns, and among the elite at that. My explanation is thus akin to that of Isaiah Berlin in the long quotation that Hitchens later supplies.

Hitchens also overdoes Herzen’s stature as a “rival” to Marx and misjudges his peasant-based socialism as a “missed opportunity” for Russia. In fact Herzen’s dream of building socialism in Russia on the foundation of the collectivist peasant commune, thereby beating advanced Europe to the end of history, was hopelessly utopian. His positive role, rather, was the more limited liberal one of launching an active opposition to Russian autocracy with his émigré newspaper, *The Bell*. Yet in this latter role he was soon overrun on his left by much harder socialists—“sons” against “fathers,” in Turgenev’s famous dichotomy. Through it all, as Hitchens aptly notes in his conclusion, Herzen displayed a talent for recording “the emotions of disaster and disillusionment” that permanently stalk the high-minded left.

Martin Malia
Professor of History Emeritus
University of California at Berkeley
Berkeley, Calif.

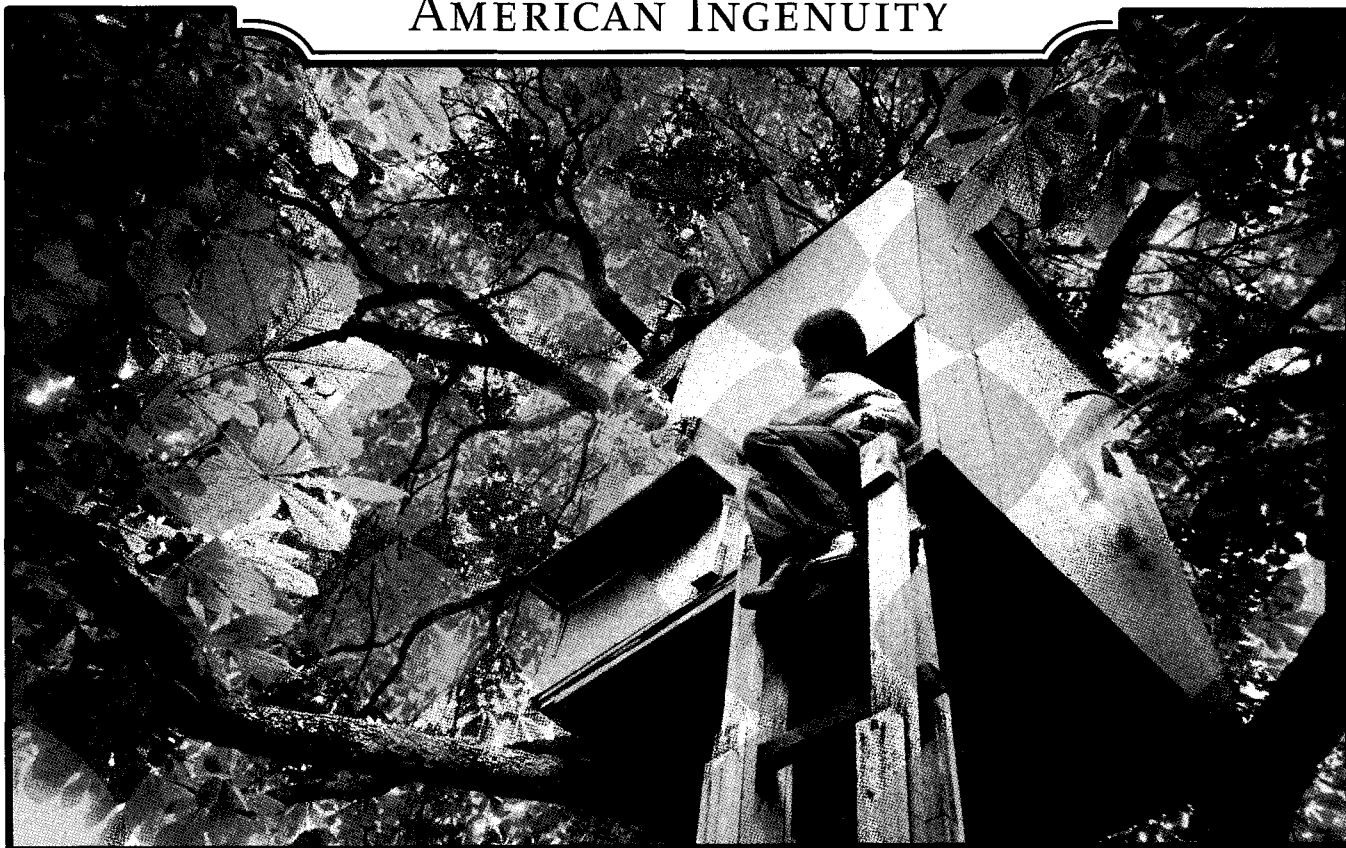


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Investment Managers

THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, essays on the return of the MCP, the business of running al Qaeda, and two Irish personality types

DAVID BROOKS

"Have you noticed that male chauvinism is making a comeback? ... Considering that for at least a generation polite opinion has been unanimous in the view that women should not be objectified, this chauvinist revival is astonishing. What caused it?"

PAGE 22

BRUCE HOFFMAN

"Osama bin Laden is perhaps best viewed as a terrorist CEO. He has essentially applied the techniques of business administration and modern management ... to the running of a transnational terrorist organization."

PAGE 26

GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

"There are plenty of divisions in Ireland, but none is more fascinating than the one between the two types personified by [Eamon] Dunphy's enemies and Dunphy himself."

PAGE 30

PRIMARY SOURCES

"Restaurant servers who leave a piece of candy with the check make 18 percent more in tips than servers who don't."

PAGE 33

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

"The world's highest abortion rates are seen in formerly or currently communist countries, where abortion clinics have historically been easier to find than effective contraception."

PAGE 38

P. J. O'ROURKE

"There can be no greater sacrifice than that a man lay down his lifestyle for others."

PAGE 40

WHAT NOW?

Developments, encouraging and otherwise

BY MICHAEL KELLY

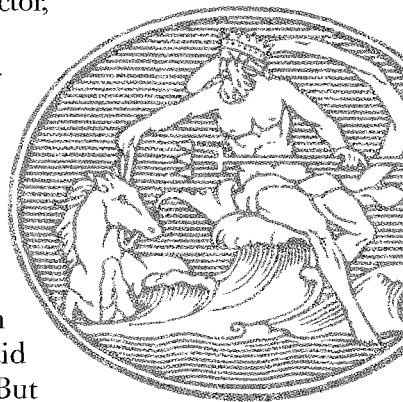
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I think poets have become the conscience of our culture," Sam Hamill, who is a famous poet from Port Townsend, Washington, said recently. Well, until now not so terribly famous, actually. But he is enjoying a lovely little cuddle-up with the bitch goddess these days, owing to his conscientious decision to respond to an invitation to join other poets in a White House chat with Laura Bush by calling on his fellow pacifists of the pentameter to deluge the White House with anti-war poems, which led Mrs. Bush to postpone the event, which led to quite a few stories in the press placing the previously unmarked-for-greatness Hamill in the company of Aristophanes, Walt Whitman, W. H. Auden, Robert Graves, Rupert Brooke, and Robert Lowell. It is hard, if rewarding, work being a Conscience of Our Culture. "I'm putting in eighteen-hour days. I'm sixty, and I'm tired, but it's pretty wonderful," Hamill said, gamely.

Hard and dangerous, noted the theater director, actor, and Conscience of Our Culture André Gregory, who with Wallace Shawn, his collaborator in the 1981 movie *My Dinner With André*, recently produced a piece of political theater in Manhattan called *An Evening of Conscience*, featuring the permanent celebrity consciences Edward Asner, Tony Kushner, Eve Ensler, Danny Glover, and Pete Seeger.

"I don't think it's an accident that in totalitarian societies they always arrest the artists first," said the as-yet-thank-God-not-arrested Gregory. But "the responsibility of the artist, each of us in our way, is to tell the truth," he declared. "And the truth generally involves a great deal of ambiguity, and in times of war, ambiguity and paradox are the first things to go. People want simple black-and-white answers." This is true, judging from the approving reception accorded to *An Evening of Conscience*.

Hard and dangerous and damned courageous. "It's a very uncomfortable thing to question the honesty and motives of your leaders," the *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman recently said. "I'm saying that the men who are controlling our destiny are lying. Not many journalists or many people want to confront them." But Krugman is willing, twice weekly, and he has paid a price: fame and influence as a columnist for the most important newspaper in the world.



Hard and dangerous and damned courageous and self-sacrificing. "If you're an actor who is pro-war, you're a hero," the actress and comic Janeane Garofalo explained in *The Washington Post*. "If you're an actor against the war, you're suspect." Garofalo is a leading suspect in the anti-war group Win Without War, and she says she has been "marginalized." But she doesn't flinch: "I refuse to allow my government and the mainstream media to bully me into accepting a war that is immoral and illegal. If it means people make fun of me or think I'm a jerk, or I lose a job here and there, that means nothing to me."

Hard and dangerous and damned courageous and self-sacrificing and so very lonely, to be one of the thinking handful in a nation of dumb, deluded philistines. "Never before have so many put up with so much from so few," lamented James Wolcott, the voice of conscience at a magazine that in a recent issue published twenty-five pages of "Young Scandinavians in Their Skivvies for No Particular Reason" (sorry, twenty-two: the last three pages were a Dolce & Gabbana ad).

Despite corporate robbery, a trampling of civil liberties that makes the Red scare look like a dress rehearsal, a rapist urge to ram a paved road or oil pipeline through every nature preserve, a Tony Soprano foreign policy that fingers which dirtbag country we're going to whack next, an unaccountable vice president who pops out of his groundhog hole only to raise money for the Republican Party, or play bad cop on *Meet the Press*, and the corny spectacle of the president himself imploring us to visit a shut-in and say "I love you" (and they accused Clinton of being Empath in Chief!), despite all this, the huddled, befuddled masses have been as quiet as church mice. Those in power can't be accused of thwarting the will of the people, because the people seem to have lost their will, or traded it in for Powerball tickets.

Hard and dangerous and damned courageous and self-sacrificing and so



very lonely and really scary. "I myself feel that our country, for whose Constitution I fought in a just war, might as well have been invaded by Martians and body snatchers," the novelist Kurt Vonnegut Jr. said in an interview in *In These Times*. Vonnegut, who used to be the Conscience of Our Culture when Norman Mailer was hung over and Gore Vidal was in Ravello, went on,

It has been taken over by means of the sleaziest, low-comedy, Keystone Cops-style coup d'etat imaginable. And those now in charge of the federal government are upper-crust C students who know no history or geography, plus not-so-closeted white supremacists, aka "Christians," and plus, most frightening, psychopathic personalities, or "PP's."

Hard and dangerous and damned courageous and self-sacrificing and so very lonely and really scary and rather repetitious, especially for the global Conscience of Our Culture. "War is always the worst of solutions," declared French President Jacques Chirac in late January, asserting once again a philosophical stance toward tyranny that French governments have applied with admirable consistency since the days when the wind blew from Vichy. "We have adopted a strategy of using inspec-

tors," Chirac said, in the days before Colin Powell was to make the case for war before the United Nations Security Council. And we have still got a strategy and it is still inspections, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin declared, after Powell had conclusively demonstrated that Iraq was continuing to defy and cheat the inspection regime, in what was clearly defined as a "material breach" of Security Council Resolution 1441, sufficient as a cause for the immediate use of force. "Why go to war if there still exists some unused space in Resolution 1441?" said the admirably consistent De Villepin, whose consistency was helped by the fact that his statement responding to the presentation of evidence that France had demanded was in fact written before the evidence was presented. "Consistent with the logic of this resolution, we must move on to a new stage and further strengthen the inspections." Also, we must surrender.

Hard and dangerous and very lonely and so frequently misunderstood. "Every fair-minded person knows that when Iraqi officials say something, they are trustworthy," said Saddam Hussein, President for Life and Conscience of the Culture of Iraq, not to mention of the Internal Security Forces of Iraq, recognizing his responsibility as an artist (he is the author of two romantic novels, *Zabibah and the King* and *The Fortified Castle*, both acclaimed by leading Iraqi critics) to tell the truth, in his own way. "Every fair-minded person knows that as far as Resolution 1441 is concerned, the Iraqis have been fulfilling their obligations under the resolution. So when Iraq objects to the conduct of the inspection teams or others, that doesn't mean that Iraq is interested in putting obstacles before them ... It is in our interest to facilitate their mission to find the truth."

It can be hard to find the truth, but we are blessed with many who will let their consciences be our guides. ■
Michael Kelly is *The Atlantic's* editor at large.

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THE RETURN OF THE PIG

The revival of blatant sexism in American culture has many progressive thinkers flummoxed

Have you noticed that male chauvinism is making a comeback? Thirty years after the feminist revolution, if you look at the rap videos on MTV or BET, you'll find that "ho" and "bitch" are just about the nicest words used to describe young women. Hooters is now so mainstream as to be just another link in the chain of familiar eateries. If you turn on *The Man Show*, on Comedy Central, you can watch women in teddies jumping on trampolines and men getting spanked by bikini-clad "juggies"—the show's term for its female cast members.

Elsewhere on the cultural landscape can be found the Wonderbra, Howard Stern, *Joe Millionaire*, Victoria's Secret specials on network TV, Anna Nicole Smith, and Lara Croft. The leading laddie magazine, *Maxim*, has 2.5 million subscribers; its chief competitor, *FHM* ("For Him Magazine"), has more than a million. And then there are *Gear* and *Stuff*, and the various swimsuit monthlies, which among them must have topless, carefully angled models posing on beaches by the hundreds.

To enter the world of *Maxim* is to enter a world entirely free from the taint of polite opinion. Even the editors of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* maintain intellectual pretensions, but the single-minded pursuit of horniness is the *Maxim* editors' most striking trait. Women in the magazine's pages are reduced almost exclusively to cleavage. Men exist solely at the crossroads where babes in lingerie meet power tools and serial-killer computer games. The articles—which tend to fall into the "How to Score at Funerals" genre—are short lessons in ways to become even more shallow than you already are. (To the *Maxim* Man, size matters in every aspect of existence except attention span.)

The men depicted by *Maxim* are not without cultural interests—for instance, they are likely to have participated in prestigious chugging contests. They are

capable of emotional bonding—mostly with their remote controls, and with their voyeur buddies at wet-T-shirt contests. And they are not incurious about the world: their wanderlust can be aroused by the mere mention of the word "Tijuana."

IDEAS
**DAVID
BROOKS**

But these men have not a hint of any quality that might make them attractive to progressive and mature women. Their world has been vacuumed free of empathy, sensitivity, and sophistication. It is as if millions

of American men—many of them well educated—took a look at the lifestyle prescribed by modern feminism and decided, No thanks, we'd rather be pigs.

Considering that for at least a generation polite opinion has been unanimous in the view that women should not be objectified, this chauvinist revival is astonishing. What caused it?

Some believe that it is a product of masculinity in crisis. Insecure men, sensing that their position in the world is threatened by a generation of strong women, have reverted to the most offensive and primal versions of manhood. There's clearly something to this theory. But the lack of any sense of crisis in retro-sexist culture is striking. In the 1970s and 1980s men's magazines were notably defensive in the face of the feminist critique. In the newest men's magazines feminism simply doesn't exist. The women's movement is something that happened in Mom and Dad's time. Now the attitude is, Gather up the boys and girls, and let's all be sexist pigs together. Women are allowed to be as open about their sexuality as men; "hooking up" is common; and we're all free to treat one another as sex objects. We men can leer at your breasts, and you women can leer at our buns. We can all be Bob Guccione, and we'll call it gender equity.

Another theory is that *Maxim*-style retro-sexism is just a self-conscious, deliberately ironic joke. The men are making fun of themselves as much as

they are degrading women. Besides, it's not reality. It's just a normal urge to flout convention, to have some bawdy fun. It doesn't mean anything.

There's some truth to this theory, too. Scanning an excerpt from the theme song for *The Man Show* reveals an obviously playful element.

Grab a beer and drop your pants,
Send the wife and kid to France,
It's *The Man Show* !!!
Quit your job and light a fart,
Yank your favorite private part,
It's *The Man Show* !!!

But there is more than irony at work here. Participants in these bits of public theater are somehow simultaneously engaged in both play and not-play. Readers of *Maxim* may put invisible quotation marks around their leering at women, but they are still leering at women. In fact, the quotation marks constitute an easy escape hatch in the event that anyone ever challenges these men. They can say, not least to themselves, "I'm not a crude ogler or a loser porn addict. I'm a hip ironist. I'm playing a media-savvy game, and therefore I have permission to spend hours looking at women in their underwear."

The most interesting thing about the surge of retro-sexism is how unprepared feminists and other enlightened thinkers are to deal with it. The ironic tone of the material defeats them. Feminists seem to know they are being toyed with. They don't want to appear to be earnest plodders in the face of hip, playful gestures, and they don't want to grant that anyone is more postmodern than they are. The British feminist Imelda Whelehan wrote a book on laddie culture called *Overloaded: Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*, in which she seemed to be completely flummoxed by the phenomenon. "Classic notions of distinctions between the sexes appear to be reinforced, but it is never easy to determine to what extent parody and irony support or undermine those distinctions," she wrote.

I can't entirely blame the feminists

**"IT USED TO TAKE WEEKS TO MATCH A SET OF PRINTS. LONG
ENOUGH FOR A SUSPECT TO DISAPPEAR. NOW WE CAN DO IT IN
MINUTES. AND THAT'S BAD NEWS FOR THE BAD GUYS."**



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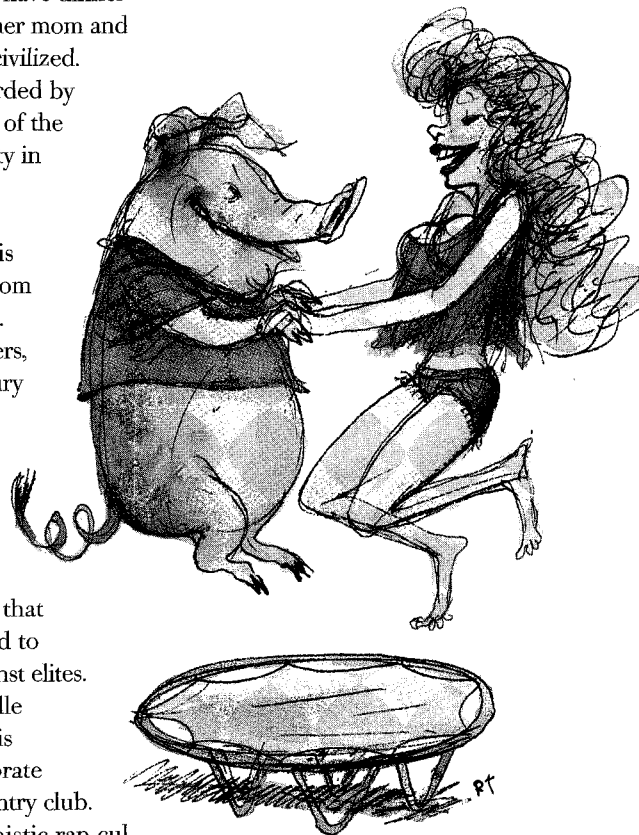


for being flummoxed. It is hard to figure out how seriously to take this stuff. On the one hand, if your kid spent a lot of time reading *Maxim* and watching rap videos, you'd know in your gut that it was damaging to his soul. On the other hand, human beings, even at young ages, are pretty good at distinguishing fantasy from reality. A young man can listen to Eminem while driving his Camaro, imagine himself as an angry young badass, and then have dinner with his girlfriend and her mom and be perfectly polite and civilized. Eminem himself is regarded by his neighbors as a pillar of the upscale gated community in which he lives.

Another unnerving feature of retro-sexism is that much of it comes from an unexpected direction. Many progressive thinkers, having inherited a century of radical European thought, assume that the most oppressive and reactionary parts of society are the rich, the powerful, and the wellborn. Partly for that reason they have tended to direct their protests against elites. They know how to handle discrimination when it is found among the corporate muckamucks at the country club.

The rise of misogynistic rap culture dramatizes the inadequacy of that approach. The notion that a self-confident elite exercises cultural hegemony over the masses and that big media corporations and advertising geniuses create ideas and products and then manipulate society into accepting them was always badly oversimplified and often completely misleading. Outsiders, from James Dean to Allen Iverson, have an innate appeal. The cultural elites may have money and position, but the definition of cool, and therefore the influence over what will

enter the culture, generally comes from the fringes. Rap and hip-hop came from the urban lower class. N.W.A., 2 Live Crew, Tupac Shakur, and Eminem may have been co-opted by record companies, but they emerged authentically from the streets. As it happens, the parts of society that, according to the class-conflict model, should have been the most reactionary—the affluent classes—have been the quickest to adopt pro-



gressive mores. It is the least privileged parts of society that are often the most sexist, reactionary, and even materialistic. We have a dynamic urban culture that treats women like whores and that regards owning a Mercedes as the highest possible human aspiration, and the leading articulators of progressive opinion have almost nothing to say about it. They can't seem to bring themselves to admit out loud that their most effective ideological enemies have turned out to be the same underprivi-

leged people they wanted to rescue from exploitation.

To take just one example: Robin Chandler is a member of the Department of African-American Studies at Northeastern University and teaches a course that includes discussion of hip-hop and rap. A 2001 interview with her in *The Boston Globe* included this exchange:

Q: How about the misogyny, violence, and profanity in much rap?

A: As professors with an enormous concern for intellectual freedom, we have to be careful not to indoctrinate or moralize while at the same time providing opportunities for people to explore and clarify their values ...

Q: You're a peace activist, and some rap glorifies murder.

A: I object to it in heavy metal, in Hollywood films, and in rap. I've told students that, but what's important is the construction of classroom debate and allowing students to have an intellectual space where they can argue and understand the other person's position, increase their tolerance for diversity, and defend their preferences with rational explanations.

Society is not run from the top, or from any one place. Instead it involves a complex dance of different groups rebelling and innovating, co-opting and exploiting. Feminists or progressives or conservatives who blame the cultural elites for most of society's ills are attacking a monster that can't control its own movements. The elites are often a step behind, trying to catch up to the real innovators. All of this raises a set of hard-to-answer questions. How do you react when people further down the social pecking order—whether they are disenfranchised whites or underclass urban minorities—are creating a culture you find degrading? How do you criticize that culture without seeming square, elitist, or even racist? No one has figured out the answers. ▀

David Brooks, an Atlantic correspondent, is also a contributing editor of Newsweek, a senior editor of The Weekly Standard, and a political analyst for The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer.

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THE LEADERSHIP SECRETS OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

The terrorist as CEO

Al Qaeda is clearly weaker than it was at the formal commencement of the war on terrorism, on October 7, 2001. It has been deprived of operational bases and training camps in Afghanistan. Its command-and-control capabilities have been disrupted. Its headquarters have been destroyed. Its leaders and fighters have been forcibly dispersed, and they are now consumed as much by providing for their own security as by planning and executing attacks. Communication and coordination among the disparate parts of al Qaeda's global network are more inconvenient—if not necessarily less effective—than ever before. These setbacks have forced al Qaeda to alter its targeting patterns. Displaced and harried, its operatives must now rely on local groups to carry out their plans and, as a result, have focused on “softer,” more accessible targets, in places as diverse as Tunisia, Pakistan, Jordan, Indonesia, Kuwait, the Philippines, Yemen, and Kenya. These have included German, Australian, and Israeli tourists; French engineers and a French oil tanker; and such long-standing targets as U.S. diplomats and servicemen.

But not everything has changed, of course; al Qaeda remains a powerful threat. The organization has continued to use suicide bombing, both at sea and on land, and commercial aviation remains a focus—as was made clear in December of 2001, when the shoe bomber Richard Reid attempted to blow up an American Airlines plane en route from Paris to Miami, and then eleven months later, when a group in Kenya with links to al Qaeda tried to shoot down an Israeli charter flight using a hand-held surface-to-air missile.

Al Qaeda has, in fact, proved to be remarkably nimble and adaptive—and the group's strength derives precisely from its flexibility. The loss of Afghanistan may thus, in the long run, have little effect on al Qaeda's ability to harm us. Some of al Qaeda's biggest plots—among them

Ramzi Yousef's 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, and his subsequent failed plot to bomb twelve U.S. commercial aircraft over the Pacific—predate the group's strong presence in Afghanistan, which for al Qaeda was important mainly as a base from which to prosecute a conventional civil war against the late

Ahmad Shah Massoud's Northern Alliance. This conflict required arms dumps, training camps, staging areas, and networks of forward and rear headquarters—but none of

these specific facilities are necessary to an ongoing international terrorism campaign.

Al Qaeda's core leadership is still alive and at large—perhaps only a third of its leaders are now dead or captured. Moreover, the two most important figures in al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, are both widely believed to be alive. Its activities are therefore probably still centralized, and controlled by top leaders, to some degree. Pakistan, for example, remains crucially important in al Qaeda operations today, serving as something of a clearinghouse for operatives and would-be recruits on both the individual and the group level. The process may be less organized and more fractured than it was in Afghanistan, but the looseness of control is not necessarily a liability.

Al Qaeda can still fill its mid-level operational command positions—perhaps in part because of the vast reservoir of fighters and operatives (some 70,000) that the group trained during the 1990s, in camps in Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan. But what makes al Qaeda strong is its continuing ability to recruit and mobilize fighters, supporters, and sympathizers worldwide.

Osama bin Laden is perhaps best viewed as a terrorist CEO. He has essentially applied the techniques of business administration and modern management, which he learned both at university and in his family's construction

business, to the running of a transnational terrorist organization. In the 1990s he did what the executives of transnational companies did throughout much of the industrialized world—namely, design and implement a flexible new organizational framework and strategy incorporating multiple levels and both top-down and bottom-up approaches. In his top-down mode bin Laden has defined specific goals, issued orders, and ensured that they are carried out. This is generally the way al Qaeda organizes its “spectaculars”: high-visibility, usually high-casualty operations such as the September 11 attacks, the bombing of the USS *Cole*, and the East Africa embassy bombings. But he has also operated as a venture capitalist, soliciting ideas from below, encouraging creative approaches, and funding proposals he finds promising. Unlike many other terrorist organizations, therefore, al Qaeda has no single *modus operandi*—and it is all the more formidable as a result.

At least four al Qaeda levels of operation can be identified.

1. *Professional cadres*. This is the most dedicated element of al Qaeda: the people entrusted with the spectaculars. These teams are carefully selected, provided with very specific instructions, and generously funded (during the days preceding the September 11 attacks, for example, Mohammed Atta and his confederates were sending surplus money back to their paymasters in the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere).

2. *Trained amateurs*. An exemplar of this category is Ahmed Ressam, who was arrested in December of 1999, at Port Angeles, Washington, shortly after entering the United States from Canada with explosive materials in the trunk of his car. Ressam had some background in terrorism, having belonged to Algeria's Armed Islamic Group. After being recruited into al Qaeda he was given a modicum of basic training in Afghanistan. Unlike the professional cadres, however, Ressam was given only open-ended instructions before being dispatched to

SECURITY
**BRUCE
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North America—he and the members of the terrorist cell to which he had been assigned in Afghanistan had themselves decided to attack an airport or foreign consulate in the United States. He received \$12,000 in seed money and was expected to raise the rest of his operational funds through petty thievery—by swiping money, credit cards, passports, traveler's checks, and computers from tourists, for example. He was told to recruit members for his terrorist cell from among the Muslim expatriate communities in Canada. Ressay, of course, panicked when he was confronted by a U.S. Customs agent immediately upon entering the United States—a demonstration that he lacked the resolve and presence of mind characteristic of the professional cadres. Nevertheless, as ill-prepared and as inept as the trained amateurs may be (Richard Reid is another example), their ability to succeed once, and thereby to inflict pain and destruction, should not be dismissed.

3. *Local walk-ins.*

These are groups of Islamic radicals who come up with terrorist-attack ideas on their own and then attempt to obtain funding from al Qaeda. One example is the group of Islamic radicals in Jordan who, observing that American and Israeli tourists often stayed at the Radisson in Amman, proposed to attack the hotel on the eve of the millennium. (They received funding from al Qaeda, but were arrested before they could execute their plan.) Another is the cell of Islamic militants who were arrested in Milan in April of 2001, after wiretaps revealed plans to attack American targets in Italy. A more disquieting example, however, is the group of Islamic radicals—associated with but not formally a part of al Qaeda—who plotted to attack the American and Israeli embassies and the

British and Australian high commissions in Singapore, along with a subway stop used by U.S. sailors taking shore leave in that city. The Singapore plotters, who were arrested before they could carry out their intentions, spent at least four years planning their attacks, conducting the kind of detailed and meticulous reconnaissance—including extensive videotaping, with detailed voice-over discussions of potential targets—that is emblematic of al Qaeda spectacles.

4. *Like-minded guerrillas and terrorists.*

This level embraces existing insurgent or terrorist groups that have benefited over the years from either bin Laden's largesse or his spiritual guidance; that have received al Qaeda training in Afghanistan or elsewhere; or that the organization has provided with arms, materiel, and other assistance in order to

further the cause of global *jihad*. Among the recipients of this "revolutionary philanthropy" have been insurgent forces in Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Chechnya, the Philippines, Bosnia, and Kashmir. Such philanthropy is designed not only to harness the energy of geographically scattered, disparate movements but also to ensure that al Qaeda operatives can, in turn, call on these

local groups for logistical services and manpower.

Underpinning all of this is bin Laden's vision—a self-perpetuating mythology that he has crafted carefully and communicates skillfully. His message is simple: The United States is a hegemonic power, opposing change and propping up Israel and corrupt and reprobate regimes that would not exist but for American backing. But the United States cannot bear the pain or the losses inflicted by terrorist attacks—as became clear when it withdrew from Lebanon after the 1983 bombing of the U.S.

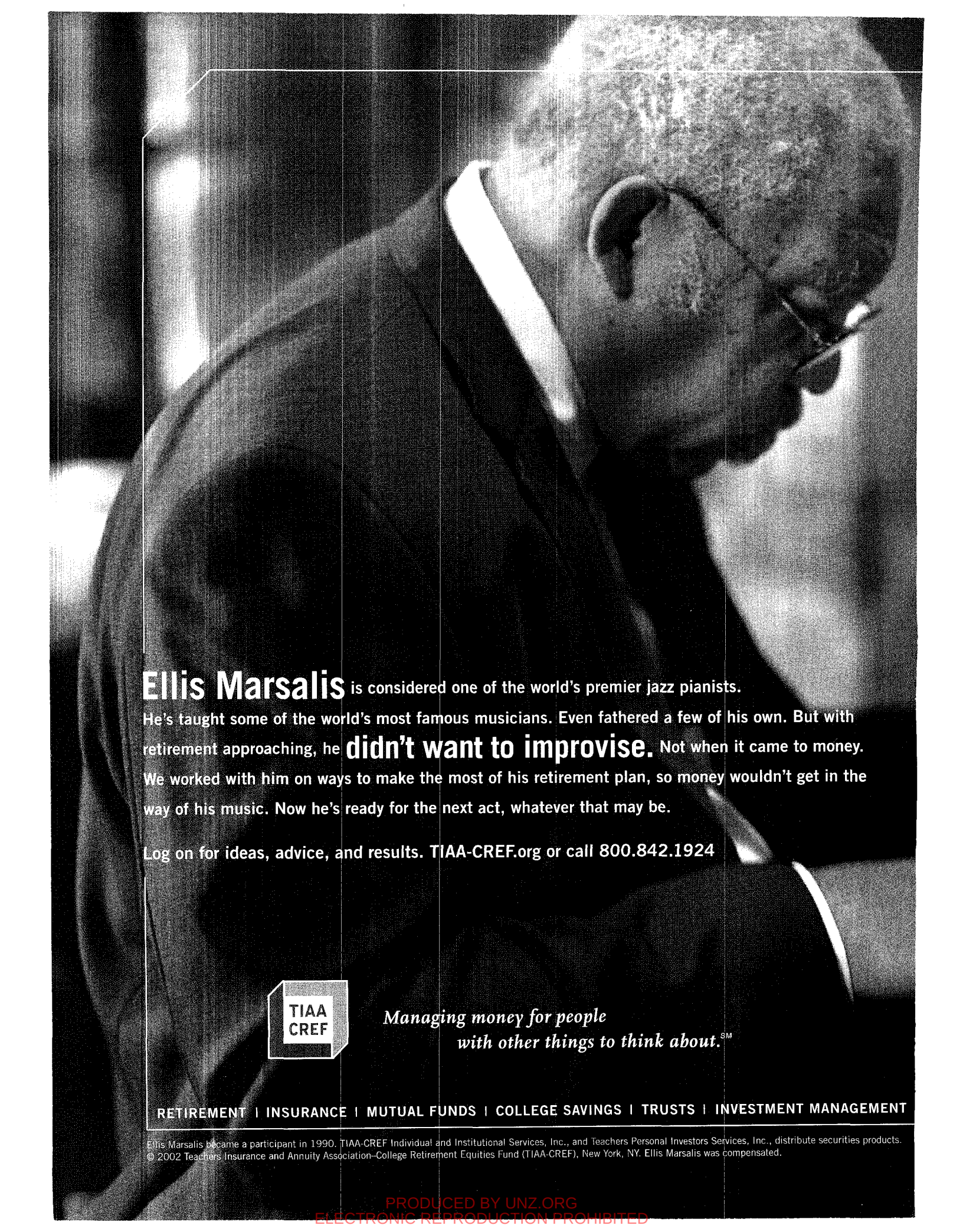
Marine barracks, and again when it withdrew from Somalia following the deaths of eighteen U.S. Army Rangers and Delta Force commandos, in 1993. In bin Laden's view, terrorism against the United States—and allied Western countries—therefore works.

Despite the destruction of the Taliban and the liberation of Afghanistan during this first phase of the war against terrorism, bin Laden very probably still clings to that assessment. In his view, the United States is now more than ever committed to preserving the status quo (in the guise of "global stability") and ensuring the longevity of morally bankrupt regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and elsewhere. He reasons that the defeat of the Taliban was accomplished mostly by the Northern Alliance, not by the United States. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, bin Laden and his followers probably still regard the United States as a "paper tiger" (a favorite phrase of his) that can be toppled if al Qaeda survives the current onslaught in Afghanistan and elsewhere—which it almost certainly can. For bin Laden and al Qaeda, as for guerrillas and terrorists everywhere, not losing is winning.

The operations of al Qaeda have had a seismic effect on the United States and the entire world; bin Laden is one of few people alive who can claim to have fundamentally changed the course of history. And the epic battle that he has launched is not over yet: the multi-year planning period of all previous al Qaeda spectacles suggests that some monumental new operation may have been set in motion before September 11. Now, because of the destruction of the Taliban and because of what al Qaeda sees as America's global "war on Islam," the organization's sense of commitment and purpose is surely greater than ever. ▀

Bruce Hoffman is the director of the Rand Corporation's Washington, D.C., office and the author of Inside Terrorism (1999).

Bin Laden has operated as a venture capitalist, soliciting ideas from below, encouraging creative approaches, and funding proposals he finds promising.



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PADDY SOLEMN AND THE DESPERATE CHANCER

The conflict between two eternal Irish types

As farewell parties go, it was certainly merry, not to say a little exhausting. Eamon Dunphy was leaving *The Last Word*, a two-hour radio show he hosted in Dublin each weekday evening for more than five years, and three dozen colleagues, family members, and friends had assembled to mark his departure. It was a true Dublin gathering—good craic, much fine food eaten, plenty of wine drunk, many speeches made (including one by me not long before midnight, I'm told; as the program's London correspondent, I had been flown over for the occasion), until we drifted home in the small hours.

The morning after the morning after I still felt rather queasy when I glanced at the papers, which made me queasier still. A huge headline on the front page of the *Irish Sunday Mirror* screamed, "DUNPHY'S 8-HOUR BENDER," and our little festivity was described inside over two lurid pages. On one of them, under the headline "ANGRIEST MAN TURNS INTO THIRSTIEST," an unflattering paparazzo shot showed Dunphy "supported by *Last Word* contributor Jeffrey [sic] Wheatcroft" outside the restaurant. I felt like telling the paper not to be so sure of who was supporting whom, and that anyway it had been more like eleven hours from when the first champagne was opened in the Today FM studio until the last hurrahs.

But if that tabloid said something about the local obsession with our guest of honor, it was nothing compared with what appeared in *The Irish Times*. In his column "An Irishman's Diary," Kevin Myers said that he would never again appear on a certain discussion program shown by RTE, the national television network, because Dunphy had been on it a couple of weeks earlier. In any proper society "with civilised standards, a serial drunk-driver such as Eamon Dunphy

simply would not be brought on to a television programme to be consulted for his opinions on any matters of importance," Myers wrote. "But we behave differently in this wretched, sleaze-filled country"—and much more of the same.

Reading this diatribe, I thought of what was said about the Irish by Samuel Johnson, and also W. B. Yeats; I'll come back to that. But another bell rang in my mind. In an essay forty years ago Conor Cruise O'Brien mentioned

those of his countrymen "who have attained the condition diagnosed by Myles na gCopaleen as 'Paddy Solemn.'" There are plenty of divisions in Ireland, but none is more fascinating than the one between the two types personified by Dunphy's enemies and Dunphy himself.

Most readers of this magazine will wonder who Eamon Dunphy is. It's an amusing question, because it illustrates yet again that huge cultural gulf—far greater than thousands of miles of ocean—separating New World from Old, even when Americans make a parade of their ancestral heritage. How many ardent Italian-Americans have heard of Alessandro Nesta and Giorgio Bocca (an Italian soccer player and a newspaper columnist)? How many proud Jewish Americans of Eyal Berkovich and Meir Shalev (an Israeli soccer player and a columnist)? And how many strident Irish-Americans of Eamon Dunphy (soccer player and columnist)? Even in the shamrock-infested bars of Third Avenue, in New York, and of South Boston, few are aware that Dunphy is just about the most famous, or infamous, man in Ireland.

Now in his late fifties, Dunphy is a Dubliner who left school early to play soccer. He joined Manchester United but soon moved to the less exalted Millwall, in South London, where he stayed until, in his early thirties, his club career dwindled away. Then he wrote a memoir. *Only a Game?* is one of the

best books ever written about any sport, or, more exactly, about the *grandeurs et misères* (more of the latter than the former) of the professional sportsman—not the Shaq or Tiger with his mega-millions but the average-Joe pro for whom sport is a route out of poverty, a way of making a modest living, and better than the factory bench, but still likely to leave him bruised and broke.

That book was written with the help of a journalist, but Dunphy quickly found that he could write on his own, and made a new career. For years he wrote for the *Sunday Independent*, where he played the Desperate Chancer, as the Irish say: pugnacious, full of bravado, unpredictable to the point of recklessness. He is, to put it mildly, a man of flamboyant character and conduct: he was finally given a ten-year ban from the roads last year, after his ninth conviction for drunk driving, and he was suspended by RTE from his regular place on a soccer-discussion show after he turned up one Sunday lunchtime in a condition suggesting that, as the racetrack officials might say, he had not yet completed the excretion period for non-normal nutrients. There may be an element of poetic justice in the brutality of the attacks on Dunphy, who was once called the most scurrilous journalist in Ireland by O'Brien. A brilliant natural writer and broadcaster, as even Myers admits, he has himself over the years goaded one by one the sacred cows of Official Ireland (his own happy coining)—the Ulster nationalist leader John Hume, the former President Mary Robinson, and even the poet Seamus Heaney, who is way beyond criticism in Dublin.

Last year Dunphy ghostwrote the memoirs of the national soccer captain Roy Keane, a book said to have been more successful in Ireland than any other since the Book of Kells. He was widely held to have encouraged Keane's abrupt walkout from the team during last summer's World Cup, and

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was bitterly denounced for it. Altogether, both what Dunphy has written about others and what others have written about him might have been designed to illustrate Johnson's saying that "the Irish are a fair people;—they never speak well of one another," and Yeats's phrase about Ireland with its "great hatred, little room."

If the Desperate Chancer is one eternal Irish type, Dunphy's critics represent another: Paddy Solemn, the character perceived and labeled by the brilliant (and unsolemn) Brian O Nolan, otherwise known as the novelist Flann O'Brien and the satirist Myles na gCopaleen. You can find Paddy Solemn in J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* as Shaneen—dutiful, teetotal, priggish (and rejected by Pegen Mike in favor of his brutal but glamorous rival). In his academic guise the type was wittily pinned down by Conor

Cruise O'Brien: "Paddy Solemn likes to use precise-sounding terminology in a vague way, and derives from this a bracing sense of intellectual rigour"; in his clerical form he can be seen on either side of the Atlantic, the kind of Hibernian prelate who tries to dismiss child-abuse scandals by invoking theology.

And yet Paddy Solemn isn't merely risible or contemptible. At a time when the Catholic Church is imploding almost as fast in Ireland as in that Irish colony the Archdiocese of Boston, maybe it takes an English Protestant to see how much the Irish owe to their church and to priests who—often quite literally—gave their lives for those whose abject poverty they shared, and who taught them self-respect under the worst destitution and injustice. One might say

that Father Mathew was solemn for devoting his life early in the nineteenth century to the cause of temperance, and his successor Father Cullen for founding the Pioneers, whose pin proclaimed total abstinence, but drink was as much a corrosive misery in the Dublin slums then as crack is in American cities today.

If Kevin Myers was playing Paddy Solemn, it wasn't entirely without reason. I count myself a friend as well as a colleague of Eamon Dunphy's, but no friend can regard him as a role model for the young or regret that he is off the roads for ten years. (He might think of making it permanent.) What's more, Myers is a consistent and courageous foe of the fascist movement known as "Irish republicanism," and he may just have a point when he links the indolent Irish tolerance for roaring boys who like a jar with the way that

"terrorist chieftains dripping with blood of innocents are transformed into amiable, grinning grandfathers on the front pages of our newspapers."

Of course, it's never easy to be serious without being pompous. O'Brien wrote that "Paddy Solemn shudders at the thought, and cringes at the sight or sound, of Brendan Behan"—for whom read Eamon Dunphy—and that the poor fellow is haunted by a secret fear "that Ireland Will Let Him Down." He continued, "Of what avail his personal respectability if he is dragged down by a national entity which refuses to be respectable?" A graver problem still is that "republicanism" itself is a manifestation of Paddy Solemn. Nearly a hundred years ago the original Sinn Fein party said that "Ireland sober is Ireland free." More recently, while Sinn Fein's "armed wing" spent years blowing women and children to pieces, the IRA was widely admired in Ireland for at least being disciplined, honest, and abstemious (just like al Qaeda, you might say).

It would be too easy to invoke those other lines of Yeats's, which condemn Paddy Solemn under another name as

A levelling, rancorous, rational
sort of mind
That never looked out of the
eye of a saint
Or out of a drunkard's eye.

To call dissipation a form of genius looks like an excuse; and although I enjoyed our valedictory evening, it isn't one I would want to repeat in a hurry. All the same, if solemnity has sometimes been a necessary virtue for the Irish, it would be a pity if they became so suffocatingly respectable and self-righteous—so horrified by the sight and sound of Brendan Behan, or of Eamon Dunphy—that they couldn't see that the Chancer is part of the native genius too. ▀

Geoffrey Wheatcroft is a regular contributor to The Atlantic. He has just finished writing a history of the Tour de France.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Selections from reports, studies, and other documents. North Korea's ICBMs; rules of "Jetiquette"; the evolution of the centerfold model; the truth about deficits; radiation in New York City; the fall of the First Amendment

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Coffingate

Documents from Transparency International, an organization dedicated to combating corruption across the world, are rarely uplifting but almost never dull, since they are essentially catalogues of the graft, venality, and chicanery to which human beings are prone, and to which they fall victim. Transparency International's latest annual report, just published, is full of such material. Just two examples, from India: In Bangalore 70 percent of mothers at a public maternity hospital reported having to bribe orderlies in order to see their newborns. (To see a baby son costs 300 rupees, or about \$6.00; to see a daughter costs only 200 rupees.) And the Indian Defense Ministry became mired in "Coffingate" after ministry officials authorized payments of \$2,500 each for coffins that cost just \$172. Several Latin American countries have tried hiring female traffic police, on the theory (which has good evidence to support it) that women are less susceptible to bribes than men. But additional research shows that although a larger share of women in government positions is associated with significantly lower levels of corruption, women who rise to top-level positions in both public and private life tend to become as corrupt as men.

—Global Corruption Report 2003 (www.globalcorruptionreport.org)

North Korea's Missiles

A report published by the National Bureau of Asian Research last summer, little noted at the time, has acquired disconcerting new relevance. Amid comprehensive—and alarming—assessments of the ballistic-missile capabilities of various Asian countries (including China, India, Japan, Pakistan, Taiwan, and the two Koreas), what compels attention is the section on North Korea. The Nodong-1, a Scud-derived missile the country is known to possess, is capable of delivering a

nuclear weapon to U.S. military bases in Japan. The Taepodong-1 missile can go even farther; a few years ago the North Koreans test-fired one that landed off the Alaskan coast. And the Taepodong-2, which some observers believe the North Koreans may try to develop into a three-stage version, could go farther still: "Such a missile could reach most of the continental United States from North Korea."

—"Ballistic Missiles and Missile Defense in Asia" (www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/vol13no3/13.3.pdf)

SOCIETY

Discretion Is Paramount

A company called Bombardier Flexjet, which sells "fractional ownership" shares in private aircraft, has helpfully provided a list of ten "Rules of Jetiquette" for first-time fliers on privately owned jets. The rules were compiled by interviewing jet owners and flight crews. Here are a few:

 *Never, ever be late when invited to fly on someone's plane. This can't be said enough! ... Always arrive at least 20 minutes before scheduled departure or "wheels up."*

Discretion is paramount. Discretion is considered to be the height of appropriate manners. You should not discuss in the terminal with whom you are flying or your destination.

Observe the boarding, seating, and drop-off hierarchies ... The captain or the owner of the aircraft will normally greet and escort you to the plane. The owner is usually the last to board. The owner will usually sit forward facing and as close to the flight deck as possible, depending on the layout of the aircraft. This way, the owner can more easily communicate with the crew in the event of in-flight destination changes or other issues that might need to be addressed ... And remember, the owner of the plane always gets dropped off before his guests.

—"First Time on a Private Aircraft? Observe These 10 Simple Rules of Jetiquette"

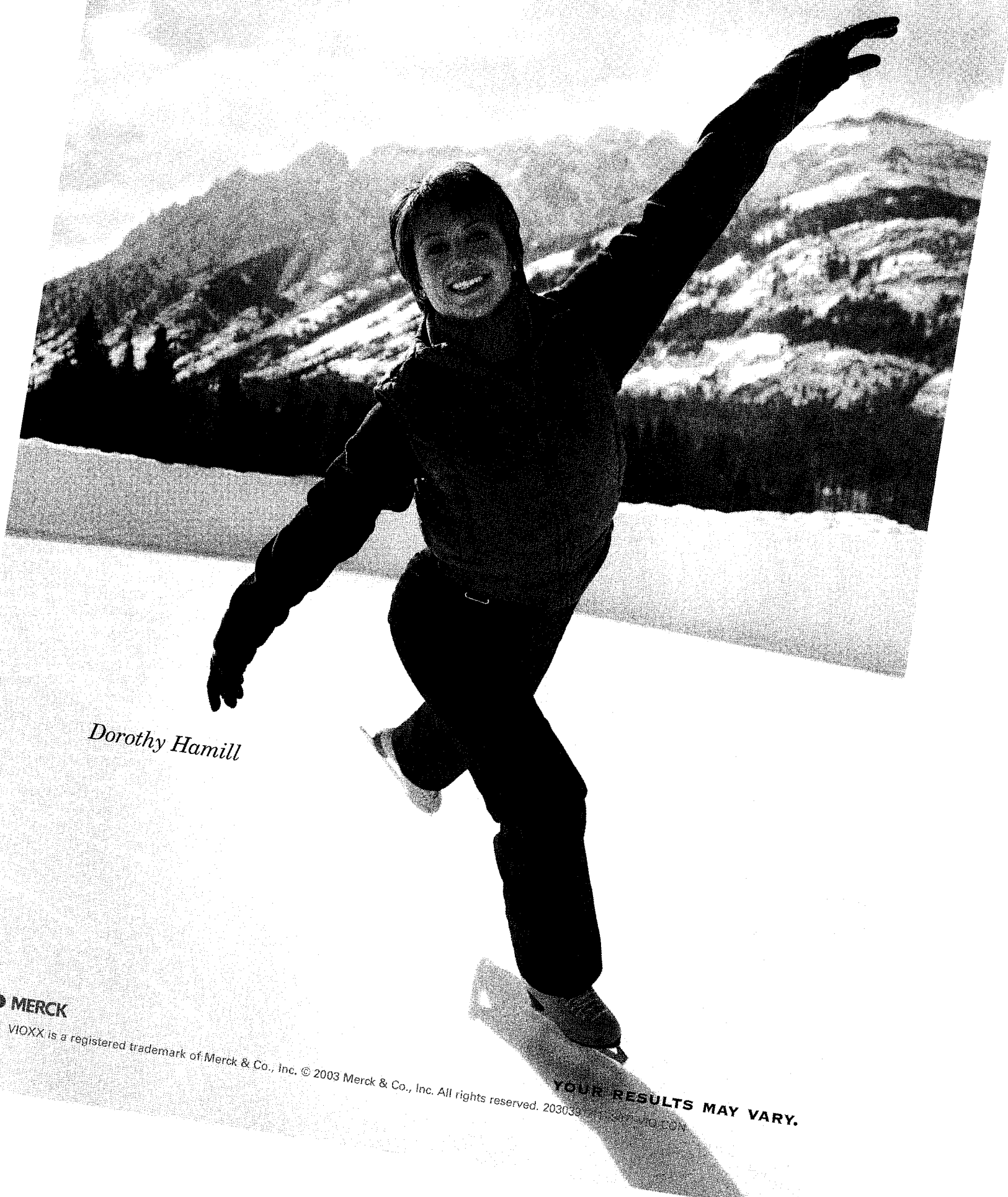
Maximal Sexiness

Two researchers examined all 577 centerfold models depicted in *Playboy* from the magazine's first issue, in December of 1953, through the December 2001 issue. Their findings, published in a recent issue of *BMJ* (the *British Medical Journal*), reveal that the appearance of these centerfold models has become—contrary to "evolved optimal design"—more androgynous over time: bust and hip sizes have decreased while waist size has increased. These changes, the authors conclude, "are at odds with claims that centrefolds' body shapes are still more 'hourglasses' than 'stick insects' and that the maximally sexually attractive female waist:hip ratio is stable."

—"Shapely Centrefolds? Temporal Change in Body Measures: Trend Analysis" (bmj.com/cgi/reprint/325/7378/1447.pdf)

The Candy Effect

Restaurant servers who leave a piece of candy with the check make 18 percent more in tips than servers who don't. (Leaving two pieces of candy increases a tip even more.) Building on—believe it or not—more than thirty years of research on tip enhancement (which has established that "briefly touching one's customers, squatting during the initial contact, making additional non-task visits, and displaying a maximal smile when introducing oneself to one's customers have all been associated with increases in tip amounts"), four sociologists undertook two studies in an effort to determine which of several competing theories most accurately explains why "unexpected food treats" produce larger gratuities. Does the treat increase the "perceived friendliness" of the server? Does it increase the customer's identification with the server? Or does a "positive affect" produced by the treat make the customer's assessment of the server rosier? Actually, the authors conclude, writing in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, it's none of the above; what generates the larger tip is the "norm of



Dorothy Hamill



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It isn't about competing. Or pushing yourself to the limit. It's about controlling the pain that can keep you from doing the things that make your day worthwhile. VIOXX may help. VIOXX is a prescription medicine for arthritis pain and stiffness.

ONE PILL — ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT RELIEF.

You take VIOXX only once a day. Just one little pill can relieve your pain and stiffness all day and all night for a full 24 hours.

VIOXX TARGETS A KEY SOURCE OF PAIN.

VIOXX specifically targets only the COX-2 enzyme, which is a key source of pain and inflammation. In clinical studies, once-daily VIOXX effectively reduced pain and stiffness.

TAKE WITH OR WITHOUT FOOD.

VIOXX doesn't need to be taken with food. And it comes in both a tablet and a liquid for easy swallowing.

VIOXX IS NOT A NARCOTIC.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT VIOXX.

People with allergic reactions, such as asthma, to aspirin or other arthritis medicines should not take VIOXX. In rare cases, serious stomach problems, such as bleeding, can occur without warning.

Tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney disease, or a history of angina, heart attack, or a blocked artery in your heart. VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for the prevention of heart attack or stroke. VIOXX should not be used by women in late pregnancy.

VIOXX has been extensively studied in large clinical trials. Commonly reported side effects included upper respiratory infection, diarrhea, nausea, and high blood pressure. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor.

FIND OUT IF VIOXX CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE.

Ask your doctor or healthcare professional about VIOXX today. Call 1-800-MERCK-30 for more information, or visit vioxx.com. Please see the Patient Product Information for VIOXX on the next page for additional information that should be discussed with your doctor.

ONCE DAILY
VIOXX®
(rofecoxib)

FOR EVERYDAY VICTORIES

**Patient Information about
VIOXX® (rofecoxib tablets and oral suspension)
VIOXX® (pronounced "VI-ox")
for Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Pain
Generic name: rofecoxib ("ro-fa-COX-ib")**

9183907

You should read this information before you start taking VIOXX®. Also, read the leaflet each time you refill your prescription, in case any information has changed. This leaflet provides only a summary of certain information about VIOXX. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals that contains more complete information. This leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIOXX when you start taking your medicine and at regular checkups.

What is VIOXX?

VIOXX is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used to reduce pain and inflammation (swelling and soreness). VIOXX is available as a tablet or a liquid that you take by mouth.

VIOXX is a medicine for:

- relief of osteoarthritis (the arthritis caused by age-related "wear and tear" on bones and joints)
- relief of rheumatoid arthritis in adults
- management of acute pain in adults (like the short-term pain you can get after a dental or surgical operation)
- treatment of menstrual pain (pain during women's monthly periods).

Who should not take VIOXX?

Do not take VIOXX if you:

- have had an allergic reaction such as asthma attacks, hives, or swelling of the throat and face to aspirin or other NSAIDs (for example, ibuprofen and naproxen).
- have had an allergic reaction to rofecoxib, which is the active ingredient of VIOXX, or to any of its inactive ingredients. (See Inactive Ingredients at the end of this leaflet.)

What should I tell my doctor before and during treatment with VIOXX?

Tell your doctor if you are:

- pregnant or plan to become pregnant. VIOXX should not be used in late pregnancy because it may harm the fetus.
- breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. It is not known whether VIOXX is passed through to human breast milk and what its effects could be on a nursing child.

Tell your doctor if you have:

- history of angina, heart attack or a blocked artery in your heart
- kidney disease
- liver disease
- heart failure
- high blood pressure
- had an allergic reaction to aspirin or other NSAIDs
- had a serious stomach problem in the past.

Tell your doctor about:

- any other medical problems or allergies you have now or have had.
- all medicines that you are taking or plan to take, even those you can get without a prescription.

Tell your doctor if you develop:

- serious stomach problems such as ulcer or bleeding symptoms (for instance, stomach burning or black stools, which are signs of possible stomach bleeding).
- unexplained weight gain or swelling of the feet and/or legs.
- skin rash or allergic reactions. If you have a severe allergic reaction, get medical help right away.

How should I take VIOXX?

VIOXX should be taken once a day. Your doctor will decide what dose of VIOXX you should take and how long you should take it. You may take VIOXX with or without food.

Can I take VIOXX with other medicines?

Tell your doctor about all of the other medicines you are taking or plan to take while you are on VIOXX, even other medicines that you can get without a prescription. Your doctor may want to check that your medicines are working properly together if you are taking other medicines such as:

- warfarin (a blood thinner)
- theophylline (a medicine used to treat asthma)
- rifampin (an antibiotic)
- ACE inhibitors (medicines used for high blood pressure and heart failure)
- lithium (a medicine used to treat a certain type of depression).

VIOXX cannot take the place of aspirin for prevention of heart attack or stroke. If you are currently taking aspirin for this purpose, you should not discontinue taking aspirin without consulting your doctor.

What are the possible side effects of VIOXX?

Serious but rare side effects that have been reported in patients taking VIOXX and/or related medicines have included:

- Serious stomach problems, such as stomach and intestinal bleeding, can occur with or without warning symptoms. These problems, if severe, could lead to hospitalization or death. Although this happens rarely, you should watch for signs that you may have this serious side effect and tell your doctor right away.
- Heart attacks and similar serious events have been reported in patients taking VIOXX.
- Serious allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat which may cause difficulty breathing or swallowing and wheezing occur rarely but may require treatment right away. Severe skin reactions have also been reported.
- Serious kidney problems occur rarely, including acute kidney failure and worsening of chronic kidney failure.
- Severe liver problems, including hepatitis, jaundice and liver failure, occur rarely in patients taking NSAIDs, including VIOXX. Tell your doctor if you develop symptoms of liver problems. These include nausea, tiredness, itching, tenderness in the right upper abdomen, and flu-like symptoms.

In addition, the following side effects have been reported: anxiety, blurred vision, colitis, confusion, decreased levels of sodium in the blood, depression, fluid in the lungs, hair loss, hallucinations, increased levels of potassium in the blood, insomnia, low blood cell counts, menstrual disorder, palpitations, pancreatitis, severe increase in blood pressure, tingling sensation, unusual headache with stiff neck (aseptic meningitis), vertigo.

More common, but less serious side effects reported with VIOXX have included the following:

Upper and/or lower respiratory infection and/or inflammation
Headache
Dizziness
Diarrhea
Nausea and/or vomiting
Heartburn, stomach pain and upset
Swelling of the legs and/or feet
High blood pressure
Back pain
Tiredness
Urinary tract infection.

These side effects were reported in at least 2% of osteoarthritis patients receiving daily doses of VIOXX 12.5 mg to 25 mg in clinical studies.

The side effects described above do not include all of the side effects reported with VIOXX. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects. Any time you have a medical problem you think may be related to VIOXX, talk to your doctor.

What else can I do to help manage my arthritis pain?

Talk to your doctor about:

- Exercise
- Controlling your weight
- Hot and cold treatments
- Using support devices.

What else should I know about VIOXX?

This leaflet provides a summary of certain information about VIOXX. If you have any questions or concerns about VIOXX, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or pain, talk to your health professional. Your pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals.

Do not share VIOXX with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you. It should be taken only for the condition for which it was prescribed.

Keep VIOXX and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Inactive Ingredients:

Oral suspension: citric acid (monohydrate), sodium citrate (dihydrate), sorbitol solution, strawberry flavor, xanthan gum, sodium methylparaben, sodium propylparaben.

Tablets: croscarmellose sodium, hydroxypropyl cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and yellow ferric oxide.

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reciprocity.” The unexpected treat from the server makes the customer feel obligated to respond with a “friendly gesture” in kind.

—“Sweetening the Till: The Use of Candy to Increase Restaurant Tipping” (people.cornell.edu/pages/wml3/pdf/Candy_Manuscript.pdf)

THE NATION

Paul O'Neill Was Right

Before the Reagan era (and sometimes after it) Republicans were the stewards of fiscal discipline, preaching the gospel of deficit reduction. Democrats were the Keynesian profligates, saying that deficits generally didn't matter. Now the parties' positions are (generally speaking) reversed: Democrats preach deficit reduction and Republicans scoff at the practice. Though perhaps arcane to most people outside of Wall Street or university economics departments, the issue of deficit reduction is crucial to the question of whether Bush's proposed tax cuts will boost or retard economic growth. A recent paper by William Gale and Peter Orszag, two economists at the Brookings Institution, concludes that the Democrats (and the pre-Reagan Republicans) are right: deficits can be very bad for the economy, and therefore the tax cuts are dangerous. The authors make their argument two ways. The first is through economic logic: even introductory textbooks make clear that not only does government borrowing (necessary to close the budget gap) cause interest rates to rise, but increases in budget deficits reduce national saving, thereby reducing future national income. The second way the authors make their argument is more entertaining: they simply quote Bush Administration advisers and supply-side fellow travelers. The people who have said that growing budget deficits produce rising interest rates include Alan Greenspan, the current Federal Reserve chairman; Martin Feldstein, a Harvard professor and a

dean of the supply-side movement; most of the rest of the economics profession; and the architect of the current tax proposal, R. Glenn Hubbard, who is President Bush's chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. Now Hubbard and company are being called upon to deny what they previously claimed was true. But before Democrats get too gleeful about this report, they should remember that the tax-and-spend left, as well as the supply-side right, may come to rue its conclusion—which makes as much of a case for controlling government spending as for not cutting taxes. (This report is an excellent primer for anyone wanting to get up to speed on the ideas at play in the tax-cut debate.)

—“The Economic Effects of Long-Term Fiscal Discipline” (www.brook.edu/views/papers/gale/20021217.htm)

Unwanted Side Effects

A letter to the editor published in a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* is discomfiting and reassuring in roughly equal measure. Two doctors from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in New York City, write of a thirty-four-year-old man with Graves' disease, a thyroid disorder, whom they treated with radioactive iodine. Three weeks later the patient returned to the clinic, complaining that police officers had twice apprehended him in a Manhattan subway station, where he was strip-searched and questioned. The doctors' conclusion: “This patient's experience indicates that radiation detection devices are being installed in public places in New York City and perhaps elsewhere. Patients who have been treated with radioactive iodine or other isotopes may be identified and interrogated by the police because of the radiation they emit.” The doctors called the Terrorism Task Force of the New York City Police Department, which suggested that any physician treating a patient

with isotopes provide a letter (listing a telephone number at which the physician can be reached around the clock) for the patient to carry at all times. Even so equipped, the doctors advise, such patients “may choose not to use public transportation to avoid this inconvenience.”

—“Police Detainment of a Patient Following Treatment with Radioactive Iodine” (jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v288n21/ffull/jlt1204-3.html)

Too Much Freedom?

Every year since 1997 the First Amendment Center has conducted a survey to measure American attitudes toward the constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. Though in previous years respondents were already evincing a fairly pinched idea of when those rights should be applied (for instance, in 2000 more than 50 percent expressed a willingness to censor speech that would offend a racial or religious group), the most recent survey—which is co-sponsored by the *American Journalism Review*—indicates that fear of terrorism has led many people to consider the First Amendment more a burden than a boon. Some examples: 49 percent of respondents said they believed the First Amendment gives us “too much” freedom (that's more than double the percentage expressing the same sentiment before 9/11); about 50 percent said that the government should have greater power than it does now to monitor religious groups—especially Muslim groups—in the interests of national security; more than 40 percent would limit academic freedom and prohibit professors from criticizing the military; and about 50 percent said that the press has been too aggressive in investigating the war on terror.

—“State of the First Amendment, 2002” (www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=16840)

ABORTION DECISIONS

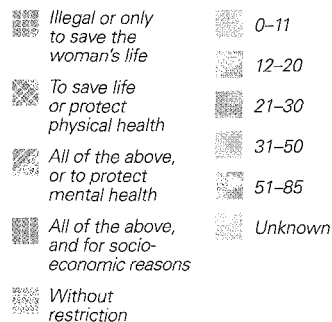
How the advent of prenatal testing has complicated the moral calculus of abortion worldwide

Every year slightly more than 20 percent of pregnancies across the world are ended by abortion—35 abortions for every 1,000 women of childbearing age, according to The Alan Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit research organization that studies reproductive issues. Assuming that a woman's fertility typically spans about thirty years, this translates into a lifetime average of slightly more than one abortion per woman. Of course, averaging abortions across the global population masks the extreme variation in rates from country to country, variation that is illustrated on the map at right. Spain, for instance, which has the lowest abortion rate among countries for which data are either known or estimated, averages only 5.7 abortions per 1,000 women per year.

Vietnam, the country with the highest rate, averages nearly 15 times that.

More than 40 percent of abortions—nearly 20 million every year—are illegal, which is not surprising given that a quarter of the world's women live in countries where abortion is illegal or allowed only if the mother's life is in jeopardy. Strikingly, some of the countries with the most restrictive abortion laws have higher than average abortion rates when illegal abor-

ABORTION LEGALITY AND ANNUAL RATES PER 1,000 WOMEN AGED 15-44*



*Rape/incest exceptions excluded

tions are included. Peru, for example, which allows abortion only when necessary to protect the mother's life or physical health, has an abortion rate of nearly 60 per 1,000 women.

Women around the world generally have similar reasons for choosing to terminate their pregnancies, such as lack of a partner or of adequate financial resources. But thanks to developments in prenatal testing, the condition of the fetus itself may become a popu-

DIFFICULT CHOICES

Percentage of respondents who would abort in the first trimester for certain conditions

	U.S. Patients*	French Patients*	German Patients	Total Geneticists
Cystic fibrosis	52	91	64	68
Dwarfism	24	51	28	62
Down syndrome	36	78	69	79
Sickle-cell anemia	72	94	66	56
Huntington's disease	32	60	33	64
Heart attack in middle age	9	32	11	48
Predisposition to alcoholism	4	24	5	17
Severe untreatable obesity	8	40	9	29
Not desired sex	1	0	0	5

*Percentage based on those who thought abortion should be legal for purposes other than saving a mother's life, rape, or incest. Sample sizes: 348 U.S. patients; 198 French patients; 593 German patients; 2,906 geneticists

PRENATAL NEGLIGENCE

In the United States if women at risk for genetic conditions such as cystic fibrosis and Down syndrome are not offered prenatal testing and then give birth to children with those conditions, they can hold doctors liable.

lar reason, especially in countries where advanced health care is widely available. Less than one percent of abortions are performed in response to genetic conditions detected prenatally, but that number may grow.

The few studies conducted in Western nations suggest that prenatal testing and resulting abortions have caused a decline in the number of infants born with Down syndrome. A few years ago Dorothy Wertz, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, conducted a survey in which patients in three countries and

THE COMMUNIST BLOC

The world's highest abortion rates are seen in formerly or currently communist countries, where abortion clinics have historically been easier to find than effective contraception. The countries with the highest rates: Vietnam (83.3 abortions per 1,000 fertile women), Romania (78), Cuba (77.7), and Russia (68.4).

FEMALE FETICIDE

The practice of aborting fetuses because of their sex has long been a concern in male-favoring Asian countries such as China and India. A 1986 survey found that of 8,000 abortions performed in a Bombay clinic, all but three involved female fetuses. Sex selection became illegal in both China and India in the mid-1990s, but anecdotal reports indicate that the practice remains widespread.

UNNECESSARY COMPLICATIONS

Of the approximately 600,000 pregnancy-related deaths that occur annually, 13 percent are caused by complications from unsafe abortions. In Africa there are about 680 deaths for every 100,000 abortions—more than double the average for the developing world overall. In developed countries the rate is 0.2 to 1.2 deaths per 100,000 abortions.

WHERE ABORTIONS LEAD TO PRISON

Nepal considers abortion to be homicide. According to a 1998 study, 20 percent of women currently in Nepalese prisons were incarcerated for having an abortion. Nepalese women who can afford the cost sometimes travel to India to obtain legal abortions.

geneticists in thirty-six countries were asked whether they would choose to abort fetuses with conditions ranging from cystic fibrosis to a predisposition to alcoholism. Thirty-six to 78 percent of patients surveyed would abort a fetus with Down syndrome, described as making people “moderately retarded (could ... not live independently)” (see table at left).

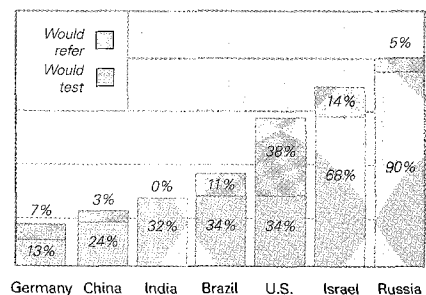
Today prenatal testing is used mainly to identify genetic conditions. But advances in reproductive technology may eventually make the selection of positive traits, such as intelligence and attractiveness, a possibility. Although Wertz's survey did not ask about such selection, it did ask if respondents would abort a fetus destined to grow into a “grossly

overweight” child. Forty percent of French patients said they would.

But perhaps a better example is sex selection, for which nearly half the geneticists surveyed had received outright requests. Although only seven percent of the geneticists thought that parents should have the right to choose their children's sex, they appeared more supportive of sex selection when presented with specific scenarios (see chart at right). When asked what influenced their decisions to perform prenatal testing, 40 percent of the geneticists surveyed said that personal autonomy was “extremely important” or “very important.” However, 62 percent said they wanted to prevent a “trend toward parental choices for characteristics unrelated to health.” Moreover,

SEX SELECTION

Geneticists who would test prenatally or provide a referral for a couple with four girls who would abort another girl



advances in medical technology are not merely contributing to doctors' ability to identify genetic traits and disorders earlier. They are also making such disorders easier to treat or prevent. —JEN JOYNT AND VASUGI GANESHANANTHAN

THE VETERANS OF DOMESTIC DISORDERS MEMORIAL

How to remember the not-quite-greatest generation

I've been admiring the plans for the World War II Memorial soon to be constructed on the Mall in Washington, D.C. It's a fit monument to the generation of Americans who endured a global depression that was only partly of their own making, fought to free mankind from totalitarian oppression by fascists and communists (when they'd gotten over being allies with the latter), and rebuilt the postwar world, even if they did rebuild it with seven-and-a-half-foot ceilings and cheap hollow doors. They have been called the "Greatest Generation," and they are, if you're not stuck behind them in the ten-items-or-less lane at the grocery store while they debate with the checkout clerk about the expiration date on a discount coupon for oleomargarine. And from what I can tell by the architectural renderings, the World War II Memorial

will only somewhat ruin the Mall.

I am reminded of when, in the 1960s, my own generation did a much more thoroughgoing job of Mall-ruining during various attempts to end war, expand cosmic consciousness, crush capitalist-pig imperialism, meet girls, and score pot. I can't help wondering

when we will get our own monument. Technically, I suppose, the Vietnam Memorial counts. Vietnam veterans were for the most part born in the same years as my friends

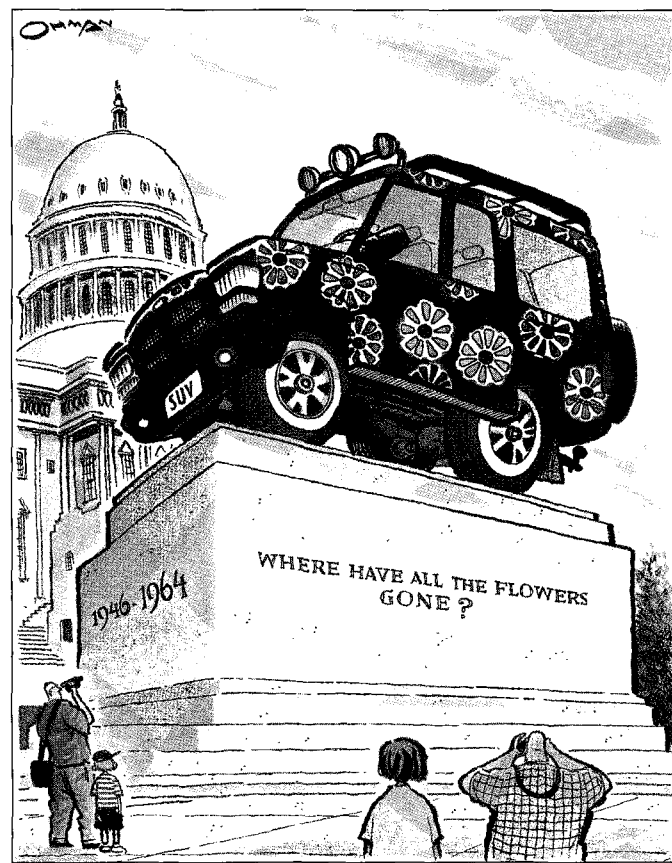
and I. But those were the kids who when somebody yelled "Get a haircut!" got a haircut—or, anyway, the Army gave them one free. What about *my* part of my generation? What about the Veterans of Domestic Disorders? I know Vietnam was a tough and terrifying experience. But you should have seen the fights around the dinner table at my house. Dad went ballistic when

he discovered that I'd joined a commune that was living in the basement rec room. And when the cops broke out the tear gas at the anti-war demonstrations, my friends and I had to tap reserves of strength and will that we didn't know we possessed, to run away as fast as we did.

We cared. My generation of Americans was the first to really care about racism and sexism, not to mention the I Ching, plus, of course, the earth. "It's important to preserve the earth's resources," I remember saying to Windflower, a pert blonde. "You and I will have to double up in the shower to get this tear gas off." Also, we were committed. I recall several people whose families had them committed to McLean.

We changed the world. Life has never been the same since that "youthquake" of forty years ago. Think of all the things we wouldn't have if not for the

AT LARGE
**P.J.
O'ROURKE**



uninhibited freedom and creativity of the 1960s: Ben & Jerry's Cherry Garcia ice cream, Narcotics Anonymous twenty-four-hour help lines, Cher, the Volkswagen New Beetle, comedians who use the word "bullshit" on network TV (after 10:00 P.M.), cats named Chairman Meow, retro sixties clothing fashions, retro sixties hairstyles, retro sixties music fads, herpes.

As a generation, perhaps we weren't the "greatest," but we certainly were the greatest surprise, when we returned from college drenched in patchouli oil, spouting Karl Marx, and wearing clown pants and braids in our beards. Members of the Greatest Generation pride themselves on all the tribulations they survived, but many of them never got over that one. Mercifully, most members of my generation did. It's been said that we never had to make sacrifices. Not true. Lots of us are awake by nine o'clock in the morning and have jobs.

We got married, had families, straightened out, got married again, had more families, straightened out (really). There can be no greater sacrifice than that a man lay down his lifestyle for others. And—"we are all one"—for himself, too, once he figures out that golf is more fun than hacky sack and decides he wants a Lexus. But that doesn't mean I won't pay fifty cents a cup extra to make sure that my coffee has been organically grown, and harvested in a way that does not cause political or economic exploitation.

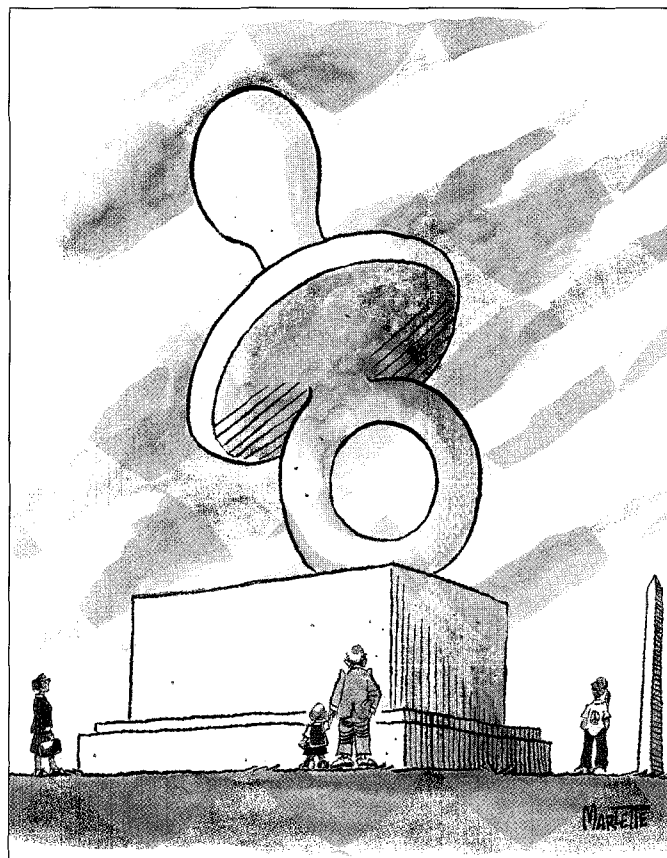
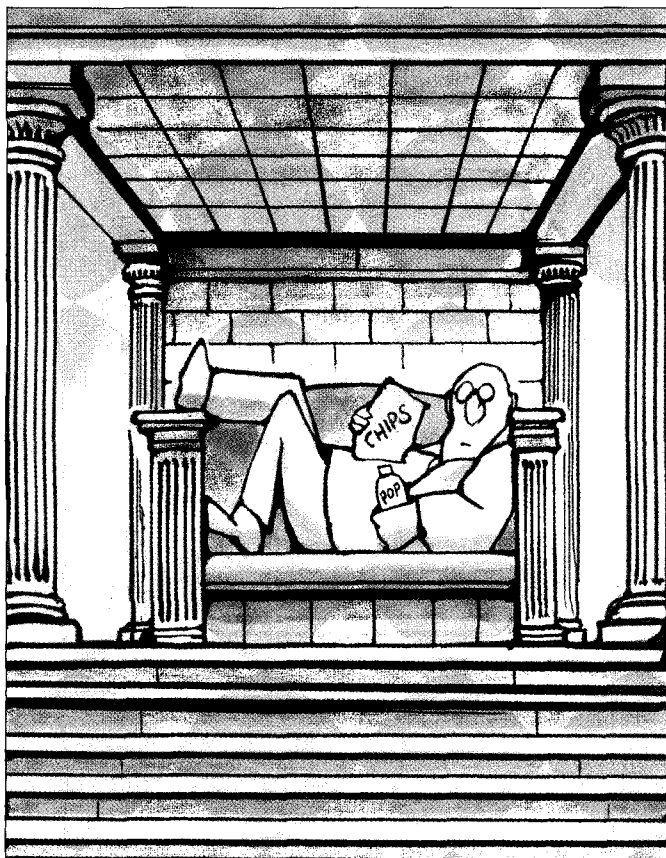
My wife, a member of Generation X (and I'm betting that *their* monument will consist of a plastic sweater box from Target with a *Brady Bunch* tape inside), thinks the sixties memorial should be something that would allow members of my generation to contemplate the driving force behind the era. She suggests a mirror. I'd like it to be slightly concave, to produce an

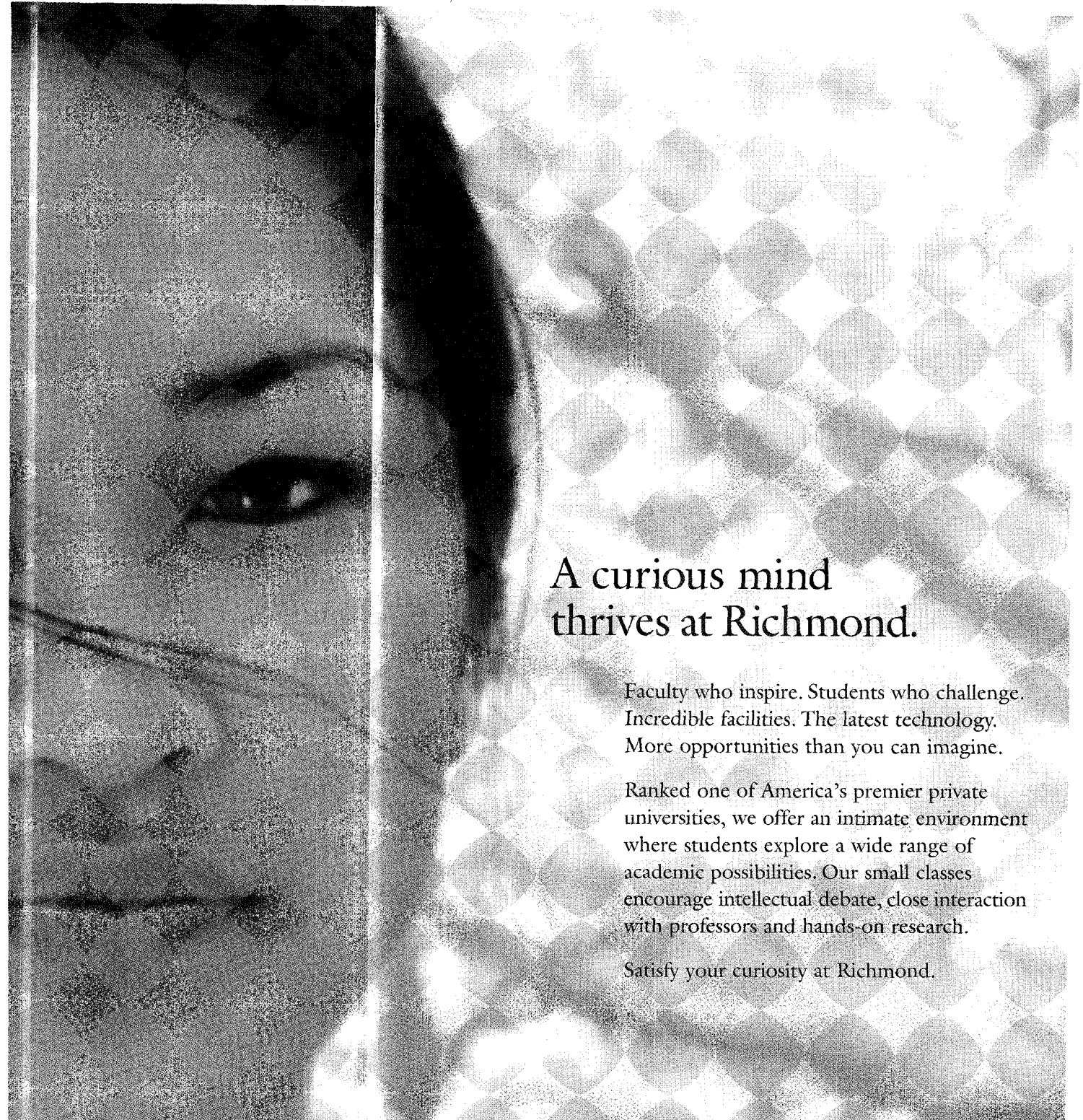
image that is slimming. My uncle Mike (Marine Corps, Iwo) proposes an enormous excavation with a donkey in it, although he puts that in somewhat different words. But the donkey might be misconstrued—many Veterans of Domestic Disorders being, these days, Republicans.

A competition should be opened, with invitations extended to the most talented architects and artists born from 1946 to 1964. (No burnouts who live in yurts or belong to crafts collectives, please.) I trust that this competition will produce something with dignity, grandeur, and a place to stash a roach if the Park Police come nosing around. ■

P.J. O'Rourke is an Atlantic correspondent.

We asked four editorial cartoonists—Richard Thompson, Jack Ohman, Jeff Danziger, and Doug Marlette, all born from 1946 to 1964—to submit a design for the Veterans of Domestic Disorders Memorial





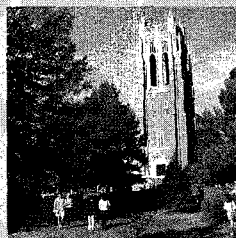
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VICES

.....

MY LAST HANGOVER

She wakes in the morning to look
 out the window at the spaces in the air
 where there should be birds.
 From the bed I watch as she stretches,
 her shoulders changing colors
 in the light. "This is the last time," I try to
 promise. "It's okay," she tells me,
 rubbing her eyes. The last time
 we visited Chicago the saxophone
 player on Michigan Ave. told her
 that she was an ocean. *You're an
 ocean, babe.* The next morning
 we shuffled into the brightly lit
 hotel lobby, the only couple in our
 pajamas, everyone eating pancakes
 in the graying dawn. Now it is the last
 time ever. She turns to the window
 again, raises one arm above her head
 to check her underarm for stubble.
 In a few hours she will kiss me good-
 bye before letting my hands drop and
 climb into her car, leave for work,
 release me back into the world again.

—JESSE IOTT

FAST FOODS: A RAP RONDEAU

With fast foods you've got to feast since you can't fast—
 In next to no time you feel famished, though
 You're looking paunchy, fat-haunched and flab-assed
 And by now the force-fed figure you've amassed
 Hamstrings your frame. Getting enough comes slow
 With fast foods.

Like fast fucking, Simone Weil warned: we know
 Appetites from addictions by an acrid contrast
 In their satisfactions: that is, by how long they last.

You *can* get too much bread; there is no
 Such thing as enough cocaine. Hungers turn vast
 As lunar landscapes where you range, aghast
 At your own emptiness. With time, those faux
 Fixes that should fill lust's vacuums cast
 -rate you: both flesh and flesh's cravings grow
 With fast foods.

—W. D. SNODGRASS

JUNK MAIL

Opening his credit report, he found the story
 Of a woman he'd lied to twelve years before, and a book
 He'd lifted from a flea market, a signed first edition,
 And the time he'd watched, through a bathroom keyhole, his sister
 Touch herself: the Trinity of Credit Bureaus knew his every sin.
 He should have been outraged, he should have done—
 What? Called the FBI? Filed a lawsuit? Staged an exorcism?—
 Whatever you do to foil omniscience. But he kept on reading,
 And it went on forever, he couldn't put it down, it was fascinating.

—T. R. HUMMER

Jesse Iott is a student at Kenyon College. W. D. Snodgrass's recent books of poetry include De/Compositions: 101 Good Poems Gone Wrong (2001) and Selected Translations (1998). A collection of his essays on poetry, To Sound Like Yourself, was published in January. T. R. Hummer's most recent book of poems is Useless Virtues (2001). He lives in Athens, Georgia, where he edits The Georgia Review.



Pictured: Juston Smart and his dad, Jeff. Juston is a brain-tumor survivor and supporter of the Ride for Kids program. For more information, call the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation of the United States at 1-800-253-6530 or visit pbtfus.org. ©2001 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

It's not often a two-hour ride lasts a lifetime.

Talk to most motorcyclists, and they'll tell you riding is much more than a hobby. They'll tell you how one ride can get inside of you, and stay with you forever.

This same phenomenon happens on another level at every *Ride for Kids*® event. Each ride works to improve the lives of kids who have been diagnosed with childhood brain tumors by raising funds for medical research.

Our progress is encouraging. In 1984, a child who was diagnosed with a brain tumor was expected to live only five more months. Today, medical advancements allow that same child to live another three years, which is three more years of being a kid, and three more years to find a cure.

Every year, with Honda's support, more than 10,000 motorcyclists devote their time, money and energy to the *Ride for Kids* program. However, everyone's ultimate goal of discovering the cause of childhood brain tumors, and finding a cure, remains many rides away.

In the meantime, Honda will continue to nurture this program. Because, while the ride may only last for a day, it leaves us with hope that lasts a lifetime.

HONDA

The power of dreams.™

A TALE OF TWO COLONIES

Our correspondent travels to Yemen and Eritrea, and finds that the war on terrorism is forcing U.S. involvement with the one country's tribal turbulence and the other's obsessive fear of chaos

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

YEMEN

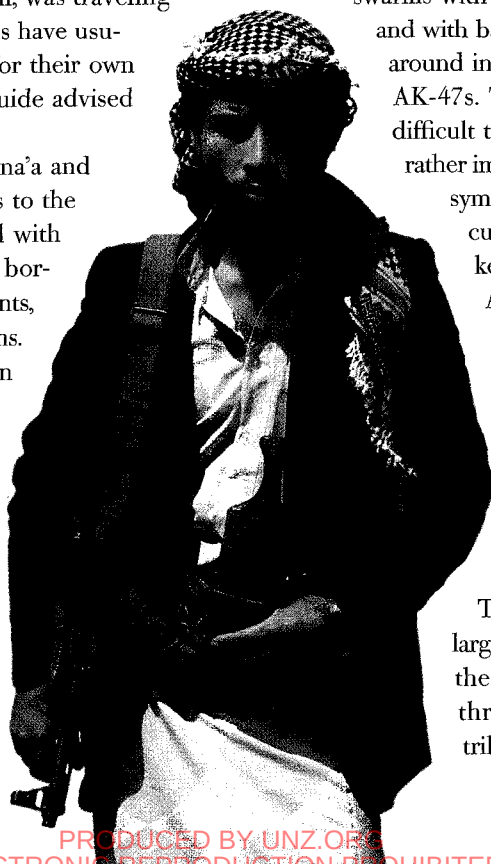
The ruins of the 3,000-year-old desert capital of the kingdom of Saba (the biblical Sheba), outside the Yemeni city of Ma'rib, should be overrun by tourists. Mud-brick towers tilt crazily on a vast, sunbaked mound, amid the crumbled debris of antiquity. But when I visited the ruins recently, I was alone—except, that is, for an armed escort of Yemeni soldiers who trudged with me through the inch of moon dust covering the ancient city. Even the souvenir stand here, built before a wave of kidnappings of Westerners, and before the region's infiltration by al Qaeda, is just another ruin. On November 3 of last year, a month before my visit, a missile fired by an unmanned CIA Predator aircraft near Ma'rib incinerated a vehicle in which a suspected al Qaeda leader, Abu Ali al-Harithi, was traveling with five others. Since then Americans have usually been prohibited from the area, for their own safety. "If anyone asks," my Yemeni guide advised me, "tell people you're Australian."

Between the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and Ma'rib, a distance of a hundred miles to the east, in ashen, sandy wastes speckled with Sabaeen ruins and abutting the Saudi border, there are eleven military checkpoints, each signaled by cement-filled oil drums. The government presence in the region is greater than it has ever been before, and this is no small achievement. Yet the checkpoints provide security for the main road only. Nearby, mud-brick battlements hide the encampments of rebellious tribal sheikhs, some with their own artillery pieces. Off the main road a Western visitor is safer under the protection of a local tribe than with a government escort.

Filthy cinder-block storefronts line portions of the Sana'a-Ma'rib road, crowded with tribesmen buying and selling guns and qat—a plant that provides a mildly energizing narcotic effect when chewed. Qat offers Yemenis a rare luxury in an otherwise dismal existence. But qat crops are water-intensive, and their cultivation is a reason for the ongoing desertification of the country. According to the World Bank, groundwater supplies in Yemen will last no more than another generation or two. Meanwhile, Yemen's population growth rate is higher than three percent, one of the highest in the Middle East. Half of the country's population consists of children under fifteen.

Ma'rib's ratty streets smell of urine and petrol. The city swarms with young men, often in their early teens and with bad teeth and skin discolorations, riding around in pickup trucks, armed with knives and AK-47s. The knives are *jambiyahs*. Blunt and difficult to remove from their sheaths, they are rather impractical as ready weapons, and instead symbolize the stabilizing influence of tribal custom in Yemen—the social glue that keeps the rate of random crime low. The AK-47 is another matter. "Once you have a gun, why bother to learn to read and write?" a Yemeni soldier said to me, after I had asked a particularly hostile knot of young men if they attended school. They did not.

Estimates of the number of firearms within Yemen's borders go as high as 80 million—four for every Yemeni. Their availability, along with perhaps the largest al Qaeda presence anywhere outside the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, threatens to transform the small-scale tribal fighting that has plagued Yemen for



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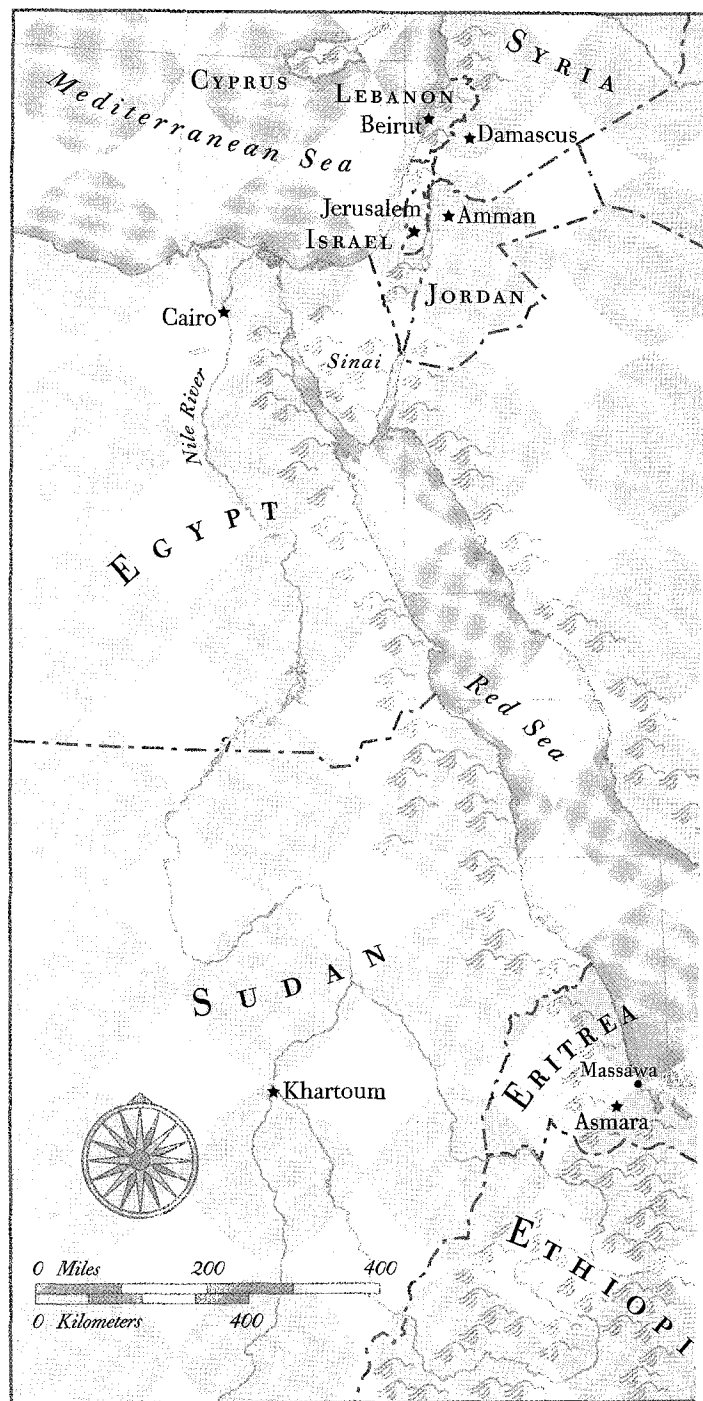
centuries into a debilitating anarchy. Indeed, the high walls, the concertina wire, and the proliferation of armed guards in Sana'a indicate the level of apprehension felt by both the Yemeni government and the foreign community here.

Keep in mind that terrorism is an entrepreneurial activity, dominated by enterprising self-starters. An American military expert told me, "In Yemen you've got nearly twenty million aggressive, commercial-minded, and well-armed people, all extremely hard-working compared with the Saudis next door. It's the future, and it terrifies the hell out of the government in Riyadh." Take, for example, the Wadi Hadhramaut, a hundred-mile-long oasis in southeastern Yemen, surrounded by great tracts of desert and stony plateau and inhabited since 1,000 B.C. Despite its isolation and a history of insular tribal feuds, the region has for centuries maintained links with India and Indonesia, among other places. The Nizam of Hyderabad, in south-central India, recruited his bodyguards exclusively from among Hadhrami tribesmen. The Hadhramaut is also linked to Saudi Arabia, by Bedouin trails that in antiquity were caravan routes. Today all this makes for a convenient social and economic network in which an organization like al Qaeda can conduct global business—especially since Osama bin Laden's family has its origins in the Hadhramaut region.

Yemen is central to the destiny of Arabia and, therefore, to the war on terrorism. It was the political tensions in the Arabian Peninsula that spawned most of the September 11 terrorists, almost all of whom were Saudi nationals. Though Yemen has only a quarter of Saudi Arabia's land area, its population is almost as large, so the demographic core of the peninsula is here in its mountainous southwest corner, where sweeping basalt plateaus, rearing up into sandcastle formations and volcanic plugs, embrace a network of oases densely inhabited since the classical age.

Separated from one another by mountain fastnesses and rich from the production of funerary spices, ancient tribal kingdoms such as Saba, Hadhramaut, and Himyar fought wars even as their merchants cultivated contacts with Africa and South Asia. These kingdoms were followed by a bewildering array of medieval Shiite and Sunni Arab dynasties, among them the Ziyadids, the Zaydis, and the Rasulids, and while they reigned each valley or oasis remained sovereign unto itself. Though the Ottoman Turks ostensibly conquered Yemen in 1517, large swaths of tribal lands never came under their control. The British officers who followed the Turks and manned the Aden Protectorate were kept busy maintaining peace among the feuding tribes in the Hadhramaut and adjacent wadis. Freya Stark, a British explorer and Arabist who traveled in Yemen in the 1930s, wrote of "wild little men of some earlier world" who spent a lifetime in "guerrilla warfare."

Violence has never truly ceased in this corner of Arabia. From 1962 to 1968, in northern Yemen, a civil war between



the forces of a conservative imam and revolutionary officers supported by Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt gradually disintegrated into tribal feuding, with villages regularly switching sides; the conflict claimed 200,000 lives before a military-run republic, known as North Yemen, emerged. Meanwhile, in southern Yemen, the Aden Protectorate gave way to a Marxist state, known as South Yemen; Moscow's attempt in 1986 to change the leadership of the Yemeni Communist Party led to a month-long intertribal war in which 10,000 people were killed. The Soviets found that governments in Yemen, as in Afghanistan, were easy to change, but that once installed they were undermined by clan divisions with origins

JEFFREY L. WARD



in the hinterland. Because of its rugged topography, which has sustained a history of warlordism, Yemen, like Afghanistan, has been a stranger to successful colonial rule and to effective central government.

North and South Yemen were officially united in 1990, after South Yemen collapsed in the course of the worldwide dissolution of the Soviet empire. But the experiment with democracy, which succeeded in Eastern Europe, led instead to another civil war, in 1994, this time along north-south lines. The north emerged victorious; 7,000 people died in the fighting. Charred tanks still litter the southern road along the Arabian Sea.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a former army lieutenant colonel, has ruled first North Yemen and then unified Yemen since 1978. By most accounts, his government controls the main roads, oil fields, and pipelines; but significant patches of the countryside, especially the desert regions near the Saudi border, such as Ma'rib, al-Jawf, and Sa'da, stand largely ungovernable. Traveling around Yemen, one can see why this situation obtains. I sat at many crowded local road stalls where every man or boy not only had an AK-47 but didn't put it down even while eating. Nevertheless, President Saleh may be doing better than the Turks or the British before him in extending control over this country.

The level of stress on an Arab leader like Saleh—and, indeed, the risks both to him and to his immediate and extended family should he badly miscalculate—is so great that it would immobilize most American politicians, themselves no strangers to intense pressure. The aim of a ruler in Saleh's position is less to accomplish great things than to rule for a long time and then die peacefully in bed. This is why the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak—whose somewhat sterile, dead-end autocracy evokes derision in the West—is by the region's standards a success, whereas his more dynamic predecessor, Anwar Sadat, assassinated by Islamic radicals in 1981, is often judged to have been an abject failure. Saleh's ability to keep hold of Yemen for a quarter of a century, even though several of his predecessors had short tenures before being assassinated, constitutes one of the region's less remarked-on success stories. Saleh has accomplished this by mastering tribal politics—which truly define what we in the West mean by “underdevelopment.”

Underdevelopment can encompass many things (illiteracy, bad infrastructure, high unemployment, and infant mortality), all of which can be found in abundance in Yemen. Yet at root the word defines a situation in which the governing administration and its attendant bureaucracies are not guided by an impersonal system of laws and standards. Family ties and whom one knows are what's important. Thus Mexico is underdeveloped, even though it is a democracy, because Mexican judges are regularly bribed, and the police are perceived to be as dangerous as the criminals. Yemen is the ultimate underdeveloped country because of its tribal nature—an inheritance of geography and antiquity.

One afternoon in Sana'a, I sat in the top room of one of the city's many multi-tiered houses with about twenty tribesmen who reclined on the floor or on sofas, chewing qat. Sunlight fell through the stained glass in the room's lattice-work windows. A sheikh sat with a notebook, his Makarov pistol, and his AK-47, and spat qat leaves and juice into a spittoon. He listened to numerous supplications from those in the room, including one from a man whose brother had been arrested for allegedly stealing funds from the central bank. The idea that a good lawyer and an independent judge would provide justice was not especially considered. Only the sheikh, it seemed, could guarantee a fair resolution

of the matter. “In Yemen,” one of the supplicants told me, “the *qabili* [tribal] system is stronger than the government, stronger even than Islam.”

Saleh’s regime is subsumed by tribalism. Saleh belongs to the Hashid tribe, the smaller of the two main tribal confederations in western Yemen; the other is the Bakil. Of the two, the Hashids are better organized, and have saved the President during a number of confrontations in the past, especially with Marxist South Yemen. Officially, the country holds elections and has ministries. Unofficially, local elections are often a means of institutionalizing a sheikh’s rule, so that a ministry can be partly a tribal fiefdom. Whereas rulers in the Persian Gulf states have used profits from oil to build roads and institutions in order to strengthen the grip of central government, from which modernization can ensue, this has not happened to quite the same degree in Yemen, partly because Saleh has had to use his petroleum profits—which account for two thirds of all government revenues—to bribe tribal leaders into quiescence, though these bribes will often go by the name of development assistance.

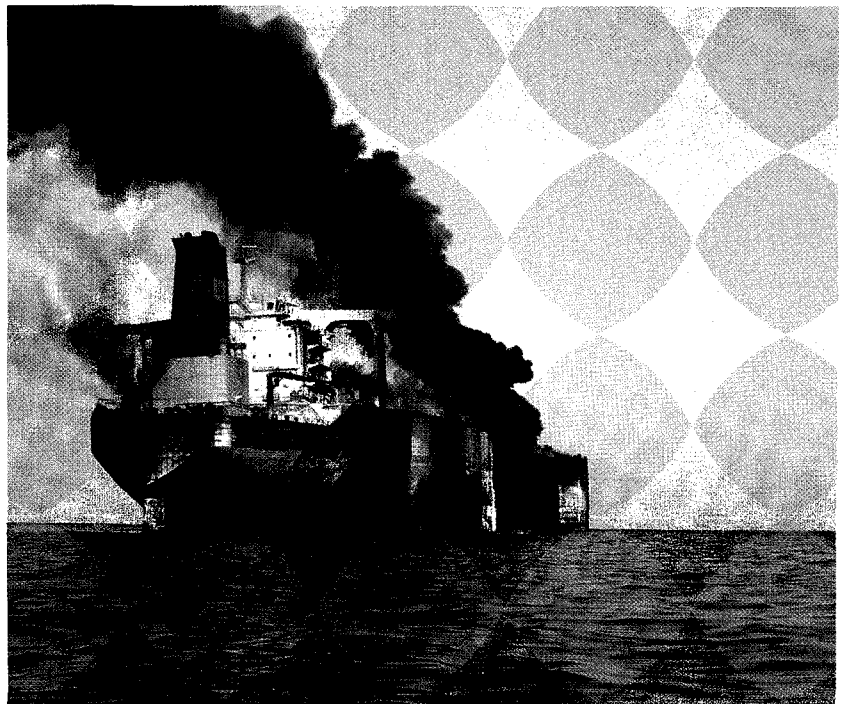
The tribal lands I traveled through in the Ma’rib region look poor, but their sheikhs are in some cases rich—from highway robbery, from smuggling guns across the border to Saudi Arabia, and from bribes. Saleh must compete with the largesse of Saudi Wahhabis and also, it is said, with al Qaeda for the loyalty of the sheikhs. To remain secure in power he must work not to alienate Yemen’s tribal leaders. One Western analyst explained, “He holds all his enemies close so that he can see what they are up to, including the radical ‘Afghan Arabs’”—veterans of the *mujahideen* war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, on whom Saleh was forced to call for help in Yemen’s 1994 civil war. One way he keeps a watchful eye on the sheikhs is by offering them land for lavish homes in Sana’a, so that they will spend less time in places like Ma’rib.

There are positive elements, of course, in the anachronistic Yemeni trinity of family, village, and tribe. It prevents the kind of stultifying centralized tyranny found in Iraq, Syria, and other Arab countries. Egyptians view their elections with cynicism, because they are transparently used to legitimize the regime; in Yemen the absence of a true tyranny may empower tribal leaders, but it also makes elections a vehicle for the legitimate expression of public dissatisfaction on many issues. Indeed, the problem in Yemen is more the diffusion of power than the concentration of it. Even the military checkpoints are freelance enterprises, with soldiers charging a few thousand riyals (\$20) to jump into a car with a foreigner and protect him up to the next checkpoint.

Tribalism also acts as a restraint on partisan politics, so hard-fought elections need not necessarily lead to civil war, as they have in the past here. For example, the Islamic Islah party (the “Congregation for Reform”) represents the main opposition to the government. Yet the Islah leader, Abdullah Al-Ahmar, belongs to the Al-Ahmar branch of the President’s own Hashid tribe. Such links count in Yemen to a greater degree than they do elsewhere.

The challenge now is that this unruly yet viable tribal system is threatened by two destabilizing elements: al Qaeda and intense pressure from the Bush Administration.

Al Qaeda’s attacks on the USS *Cole*, in Aden Harbor in 2000, and on the French tanker *Limburg*, off the Yemeni coast in 2002, may have perplexed some Western observers.



After all, the bombings should have served to bring the United States and France, two bickering allies in the anti-terror coalition, closer together. But al Qaeda knew exactly what it was doing. Without Saleh, Yemen would be a conveniently chaotic, culturally sympathetic base for al Qaeda, much more useful than non-Arab, geographically peripheral Afghanistan. Saleh’s regime is not necessarily weak: its security and party apparatus provide an institutional basis for power rare in twentieth-century Yemen. But a substantial reduction in government revenues, which are Saleh’s main tool to placate hostile sheikhs, could still destabilize his regime. Some informal estimates suggest that the attacks have reduced the amount of cargo arriving in Aden by 75 percent, and that \$25 million a month is being lost in the container trade. And war-risk-insurance premiums for ships calling at Yemeni ports are already six times the worldwide

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average. Reportedly, Saleh's government has lowered the price of its oil to compensate for the higher insurance rates, even though the costs and perceived risks of transporting it have caused less oil to be shipped from Yemen.

Oil revenues helped Saleh to end the wave of kidnappings of Westerners that plagued Yemen in the late 1990s. In typical enterprising Yemeni fashion, a sheikh who needed a water well or some other form of aid would simply kidnap a foreigner and hold him for ransom until a bargain with the regime had been struck. As the burgeoning tourist industry collapsed, Saleh increased the military presence along the main roads and made financial deals with tribal leaders to halt the abductions. Since the end of 2001 there have been no expatriate kidnappings. But if oil revenues diminish further, Westerners in Yemen fear, the abductions could resume.

Meanwhile, President George W. Bush has applied what can only be described as overwhelming pressure on Saleh to hunt down members of al Qaeda in Yemen. The successful Predator attack in Ma'rib—the product of intelligence that very probably came from the highest levels of the Yemeni government—shows how effective such pressure can be. In return Saleh is getting \$22 million a year in military aid, which includes funds to establish a coast guard for

moderate President Bush for the time being. In turn, the Americans have made a deal with this former “bad guy”: it is said that giving his regiment a chunk of the American military-aid package is the price of doing business here. After Saleh, Ali Muhsen—not the chief of the military staff or the Prime Minister—may well be the most important person in Yemen. His ties with the radicals will be crucial for Saleh should the latter ever need to distance himself swiftly and credibly from Washington.

ERITREA

On the Horn of Africa, just a forty-five-minute flight from Yemen, across the Red Sea choke point of the Bab el Mandeb (“The Gate of Lament”), is the newly independent, sleepily calm, and remarkably stable state of Eritrea. While the West promotes democracy, market liberalization, military demobilization, and the muting of ethnic hatreds as necessary to domestic tranquillity, Eritrea, at least for the moment, provides a rejoinder to all that. The country has achieved a degree of non-coercive social discipline and efficiency enviable in the developing world and particularly in Africa—and it has done so by ignoring the West's advice on democracy and development, by cultivating a sometimes obsessive and narcissistic dislike of its neigh-

The attacks off Yemen's coast perplexed some observers. But al Qaeda knew what it was doing: destabilizing the Yemeni regime, without which Yemen would be a conveniently chaotic, culturally sympathetic base for terrorist operations.

the protection of Aden and other ports and to train Yemeni special forces to project power in the tribal badlands. Then there is U.S. aid for building hospitals and schools in the very areas threatened by al Qaeda, as part of a brave and spirited American attempt to show local people whose side they should be on.

Although in 1990 and 1991 Saleh allied himself with Saddam Hussein, now a stream of U.S. officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney and General Tommy Franks, the head of the U.S. fighting force in the Middle East, have paid visits to Sana'a. “Saleh has bought himself a one-way ticket with the Americans,” a Western official in Yemen told me. “There is no turning back for him now.”

Saleh has reduced the risk to himself by pulling closer to Ali Muhsen Saleh Al-Ahmar, his half brother through his mother and the brigadier general of an armored division that protects the capital. The general is reputed to be a buttoned-down, capable organizer who is close to the fundamentalist Islah movement, to radical gun-running sheikhs, and even to some in al Qaeda; one expert in Yemen even speculates that Ali Muhsen knew in advance of the attack on the USS *Cole*. The American pressure following September 11 was so severe, however, that both Ali Muhsen and Saleh felt they had no choice but to accom-

bors, and by not demobilizing its vast army, built up during a thirty-year conflict with Ethiopia, unless there are jobs waiting for the troops.

Whereas Yemen's streets and shops are plastered with photos of President Saleh (whose cult of personality is mild compared with those of other Arab and African leaders), one never sees such photos of the Eritrean President, Isaias Afewerki, the veritable founder of this country. For decades Afewerki led a low-intensity guerrilla movement that finally wrested independence from Ethiopia in 1991. “Photos of me would create an air of mystery and distance from the people,” he told me in December. “It's the lack of photos that liberates you. I hate high walls and armed guards.” While other leaders in the region live inside forbidding military compounds, Afewerki lives in a modest suburban-style house and greets people in his secretary's office, which sits at the end of an undistinguished corridor. He moves around the capital in the passenger seat of a four-wheel-drive vehicle, with only one escort car, stopping at red lights. Western diplomats here say they have seen him disappear into large crowds of Eritreans without any security detail at all. “It's easy to put a bullet in him, and he knows it,” one foreign diplomat said to me.

Security, which consumes the Western diplomatic and aid communities in Sana'a (and everywhere else in the Middle

East), is barely an issue in Asmara, Eritrea's capital. Despite its tattered storefronts, Asmara not only is one of the cleanest capital cities in Africa but also may be the only capital south of the Sahara where one can leave the car doors unlocked or prowl the back streets at all hours without fear of being robbed, even though the police are barely in evidence. American, Israeli, and other resident diplomats and aid administrators in Eritrea move freely around the country without guards or other escorts, as if they were at home.

Desperately poor and drought-stricken, with almost three quarters of its 3.5 million inhabitants illiterate, Eritrea nonetheless has a surprisingly functional social order. Women run shops, restaurants, and hotels; handicapped people have shiny new crutches and wheelchairs; people drive slowly and even attend driving school; scrap-metal junkyards are restricted to the urban outskirts; receipts are given for every transaction; there are few electricity blackouts from sloppy maintenance or badly managed energy resources. Foreign diplomats in Asmara praise the country's lack of corruption and its effective implementation of aid projects. Whereas rural health clinics in much of Africa have empty shelves and unexplained shortages of supplies, clinic managers in Eritrea keep ledgers documenting where all the medicine is going.

The number of firearms in Yemen could be as high as 80 million—four for every Yemeni. Their availability, along with the largest al Qaeda presence outside the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, threatens to bring about a debilitating anarchy.

An immense fish farm near the port of Massawa testifies to Eritrea's ability to utilize foreign aid and know-how. The 1,500-acre complex channels salt water from the Red Sea, purifies it, and then uses it to raise shrimp in scores of circular cement tanks. The nutrient-rich excess of that process is used for breeding tilapia, a freshwater fish. The remaining waste water is pumped into asparagus and mangrove fields and artificially created wetlands. Though the operation was initially overseen by a firm from Phoenix, Arizona, and for a time employed an Israeli consultant, the consultant is now only rarely used. The Eritreans themselves run the operation in every respect.

Such initiative and communal discipline are the result of an almost Maoist degree of mobilization and an almost Albanian degree of xenophobia—but without the epic scale of repression and ideological indoctrination that once characterized China and Albania. The Eritrean xenophobia and aptitude for organization are, as Eritreans never cease to explain, products of culture and historical experience more than they are of policy choices. Eritrea never had feudal structures, sheikhs, or warlords. Villages were commonly owned and were governed by councils, or *baitos*, of elders. "It was not a society deferential to individual authority," I was told by Yemane Ghebre Meskel, the director of Presi-

dent Afewerki's office, "so we didn't need Marxist ideology to achieve a high stage of communalism." Wolde-Ab Yisak, the president of the University of Asmara, observed, "Communal self-reliance is our dogma, which in turn comes from the knowledge that we Eritreans are different from our neighbors." (On my flight out of Eritrea, I overheard a teenage Eritrean girl from the diaspora lecturing her younger siblings in American English about how "the Ethiopians murdered our people.")

A monument in downtown Asmara definitively symbolizes such self-reliance, collectivity, and rudimentary survival. The monument celebrates not an individual, or even a generic guerrilla fighter, but a giant pair of sandals—*shedas*, in the native Tigrinya language. Such sandals, worn by every Eritrean fighter during the long struggle with Ethiopia, were homemade from recycled tire rubber, and gave fighters the ability to move quickly in the stony desert war zone. The monument shows what mythic proportions the conflict with Ethiopia has achieved in the minds of Eritreans; it has come to supersede the power of religion itself, in a society split evenly between Islam and Orthodox Christianity. This is an impressive achievement on a continent where Muslims and Christians are forming increasingly antagonistic group identities.

Eritrea's clarified sense of nationhood, rare in a world of nation-states rent by tribalism and globalization, is in part a legacy of Italian colonialism. "We acknowledge that the legacy of colonialism was not all negative," says Yemane Ghebreab, the political-affairs officer of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice—successor to the country's guerrilla force, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. Having conquered Eritrea in the late nineteenth century, the Italians had by the late 1930s turned their new colony into one of the most highly industrialized places in Africa, with road and railway networks that united a people previously divided by mountains and deserts. To drive from Asmara to Massawa—a descent of more than 7,500 feet in only seventy miles, down tangled vertebrae of coppery-green peaks, on a road of never-ending switchbacks, bridges, and embankments, built by Mussolini in the mid-1930s and kept in excellent condition by Eritrean highway crews working seven days a week—is to experience the historical energy of the industrialized West transplanted successfully to an African nation.

Another benefit of Italian colonialism, according to Ghebre Meskel, was town planning. Rather than concentrate everything in Asmara, the Italians developed Massawa and similar towns so as to prevent the overcentralization that

now plagues other developing countries. To stem migration into Asmara and preserve this legacy, the Eritrean government has tried to improve life in rural areas; thus Asmara is not surrounded by shantytowns that might breed political extremism.

Following the defeat of Fascist Italy in World War II, and the dissolution of its East African empire, the new United Nations voted to incorporate Eritrea into Ethiopia. The Eritreans, unhappy with this decision, finally revolted in 1961. For thirteen years Eritrean guerrillas fought an Ethiopia backed by the United States. In 1974, when Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown, leading to a Marxist regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, Eritrean guerrilla activity did not cease, and from then on the Eritreans fought an Ethiopia backed by the Soviet Union. Despite their ability to grind away at a Soviet-supplied war machine, which featured MiG fighter jets in the air and Soviet generals on the battlefield, the secretive and independent-minded Eritreans received no aid under the Reagan Doctrine (a U.S. program for arming Third World anti-communist insurgencies). Nevertheless, in 1991 Eritrean and Tigrean guerrillas, fighting on separate fronts, defeated Mengistu, and Eritrean tanks rolled triumphantly into the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. In the minds of the Eritreans, they had fought and won a three-decade struggle against a state ten times as populous, with no help from either of the superpowers or anyone else in the outside world. They now feel that they owe nothing to anybody, and they are filled with disdain for international opinion. (A taxi driver berated me for the West's focus on the crimes of the former Yugoslav dictator Slobodan Milosevic; Mengistu, he said, was responsible for at least twice as many deaths through his collectivization programs, but now lives in lavish exile in Zimbabwe.)

In 1996, following a long series of town meetings, the Eritreans drafted what one foreign diplomat has called "an impeccable constitution." But a second war with Ethiopia erupted in 1998, and the constitution has never been implemented. That war lasted until 2000; by some estimates it left 19,000 Eritreans and 60,000 Ethiopians dead, after tanks and fighter jets engaged in desert combat reminiscent of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973. A U.S.-brokered ceasefire has resulted in the current demarcation of the disputed border under UN auspices.

Since this latest war the very stubbornness and social discipline that continue to make Eritrea the most civil of societies, in ways rarely considered by Western journalists and policy elites, have also made it a pariah in Europe and the United States—and for good reason. In 2001 national elections were postponed indefinitely (though free and fair elections at the village level were under way at the time of my visit). Far more disturbing, though, is that Eritrea now has the worst press repression in Africa. And in a widespread government crackdown on political dissent,

eleven high-ranking officials, nine journalists, several businessmen, and two Eritreans working for the political and economic sections of the U.S. embassy were arrested; they are still being held without charges. Moreover, a campaign of national mobilization requires young men and women to spend eighteen months in the military or the civil service: a good idea in principle, but they are often kept much longer, with no guaranteed release date. That, together with the political repression and the exceedingly slow pace of economic reform, has induced young people to quietly leave the country. An increasingly disaffected diaspora has refused to invest substantial amounts in Eritrea until conditions have been liberalized.

"We're not asking all that much," one foreign diplomat told me. "They don't even have to hold national elections. If they would just implement a version of China's economic reforms, this place could bloom overnight, like Singapore, given its social control and small population." But several diplomats admitted that the sense of patriotism is so strong here, except among some of the urban elite in Asmara, that they detect no widespread unhappiness with the regime. "The change would have to come at the top," one foreign resident told me. "It's not altogether impossible that we will wake up tomorrow morning and learn that Isaias is no longer around." Another outside expert told me that he has not given up on the President, but if 2003 goes by without some political and economic reforms, he will consign Afewerki to the ranks of boorish African strongmen.

My first interview with Afewerki was in 1986, in a cave in northern Eritrea, during the war with Ethiopia. That meeting had been scheduled for ten in the morning—and at ten exactly he walked in and said, "You have questions for me?" He hasn't changed. He was just as punctual when we met this time, and he spoke in the same blunt and remote tone, with the same shy asceticism. He spoke in intense, spare bursts of cold analysis—in contrast to the gasbag homilies one hears from many Arab and African politicians—for more than two hours. Afewerki may be the most intellectually interesting politician in the history of postcolonial Africa.

"All that we have achieved we did on our own," he said. "But we have not yet institutionalized social discipline, so the possibility of chaos is still here. Remember, we have nine language groups and two religions. No one in Africa has succeeded in copying a Western political system, which took the West hundreds of years to develop. Throughout Africa you have either political or criminal violence. Therefore we will have to manage the creation of political parties, so that they don't become means of religious and ethnic division, like in Ivory Coast or Nigeria." He went on to say that China was on the right path—unlike Nigeria, with its 10,000 dead in communal riots since the return of democracy, in 1999. "Don't morally equate the rights of Falun Gong with those of hundreds of millions of Chinese who have seen their lives dramatically improve," he told me.

Yemen, Afewerki thinks, is “a medievalist society and tribal jungle going through the long transition to modernity.” He accused it of advancing an “Arab national-security strategy against Israel,” a country he openly supports. However, he accepted the international arbitration that awarded the disputed Hanish Islands, in the Red Sea, to Yemen. As for Ethiopia, he said it could fragment, because it is controlled by minority Tigreans who have created a Balkanized arrangement of ethnic groups (Amharas, Oromos, and so on) rather than trying to forge an imperial melting pot, in the way of Haile Selassie.

Despite Afewerki’s refreshing, undiplomatic brilliance, a few hours with him can be troubling. His very austerity, personal efficiency, and incorruptibility are mildly reminiscent of Mengistu himself (who also suffered from a seeming excess of pride), even though the latter was a mass murderer and Afewerki could yet turn out to be among Africa’s most competent rulers. Civilization in the Horn of Africa has often bred sharp political minds that, with cold efficiency, dealt with their intellectual enemies not through written attacks but by imprisoning or killing them. And it is said repeatedly in Asmara that the President has closed himself off since arresting the very people who challenged him intellectually.

Eritrea’s stability and discipline make it the perfect base for projecting U.S. power. And Eritrea’s President has offered the United States exactly what it wants: bases enabling its military to strike at anyone in the region at any time.

General Franks, on several visits here, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, during a visit last December, have held long talks with Afewerki. “The meetings were superb,” Afewerki told me. “I mean that they were frank, without pretensions or flattery on either side. I share the strategic view of the Americans in the region. French forces in Djibouti have been a stabilizing factor, and U.S. troops will add to that. You need outside powers to keep order here. It sounds colonialist, but I am only being realistic.”

When I pressed Afewerki about human-rights abuses, which Rumsfeld had pointedly raised in their meeting two weeks earlier, he said, “If you just leave us alone, we will handle these matters in a way that won’t damage our bilateral relationship and won’t embarrass us or you.” He indicated that he would be more likely to satisfy U.S. demands on human rights in the context of a growing military partnership, but would not do so if merely hectored by the State Department.

I worried that Afewerki, like many other realists, is obsessed with everything that could go wrong in his country rather than with what could go right. True realism requires a dose of idealism and optimism, or else policy becomes immobilized. And that might be Afewerki’s problem. He seemed more comfortable when I first met him, in a state of

wartime emergency, than he does now, in a state of peacetime possibility. He analyzes brilliantly what he knows, but he gives in to paranoia about what he doesn’t know. He did not seem to understand that U.S. foreign policy is often a synthesis of what the State and Defense Departments are comfortable with, and that therefore Foggy Bottom alone cannot be blamed for Eritrea’s image problems in the United States.

Nevertheless, Afewerki has essentially offered the United States exactly what it wants: bases enabling its military to strike at anyone in the region at any time, without restrictions. Although the World Bank has questioned the economic viability of a new airport at Massawa with a long jet runway, Afewerki reportedly told Rumsfeld, “The runway can handle anything the U.S. Air Force wants to land on it.” Eritrea also boasts deepwater port facilities at Massawa and Assab, both strategically placed near the mouth of the Red Sea.

Afewerki told me, “The increasing social and economic marginalization of Africa will be a fact of life for a very long time to come.” Ethiopia in particular, he said, will weaken internally as the Oromos and others demand more power. Its Tigrean Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, already lives inside a vast security apparatus designed for his protection. Meanwhile, across the Red Sea in Yemen, not only water

but oil, too, is running out even as the armed young population swells, potentially threatening the political order of significant parts of Arabia. And with fighting terrorism now a permanent strategic priority of the United States, the stability and discipline of Eritrea make it the perfect base for projecting American power and helping Israel in an increasingly unstable region. That, in turn, might foster the Singaporean kind of development for which, according to some, Eritrea appears suited.

So there you have it: Yemen and Eritrea, two case studies in the war on terrorism. In Yemen the United States has to work with unsavory people in a tribalized society in order to prevent more-unsavory people from destabilizing it to the benefit of Osama bin Laden. In Eritrea the United States may have to use a bilateral military relationship to nudge the country’s President toward prudent political and economic reform, so that Eritrea, too, won’t be destabilized. Thus our military involvement with both nations will mean political involvement in their domestic affairs—and throughout the ages that has been the essence of imperialism. ▀

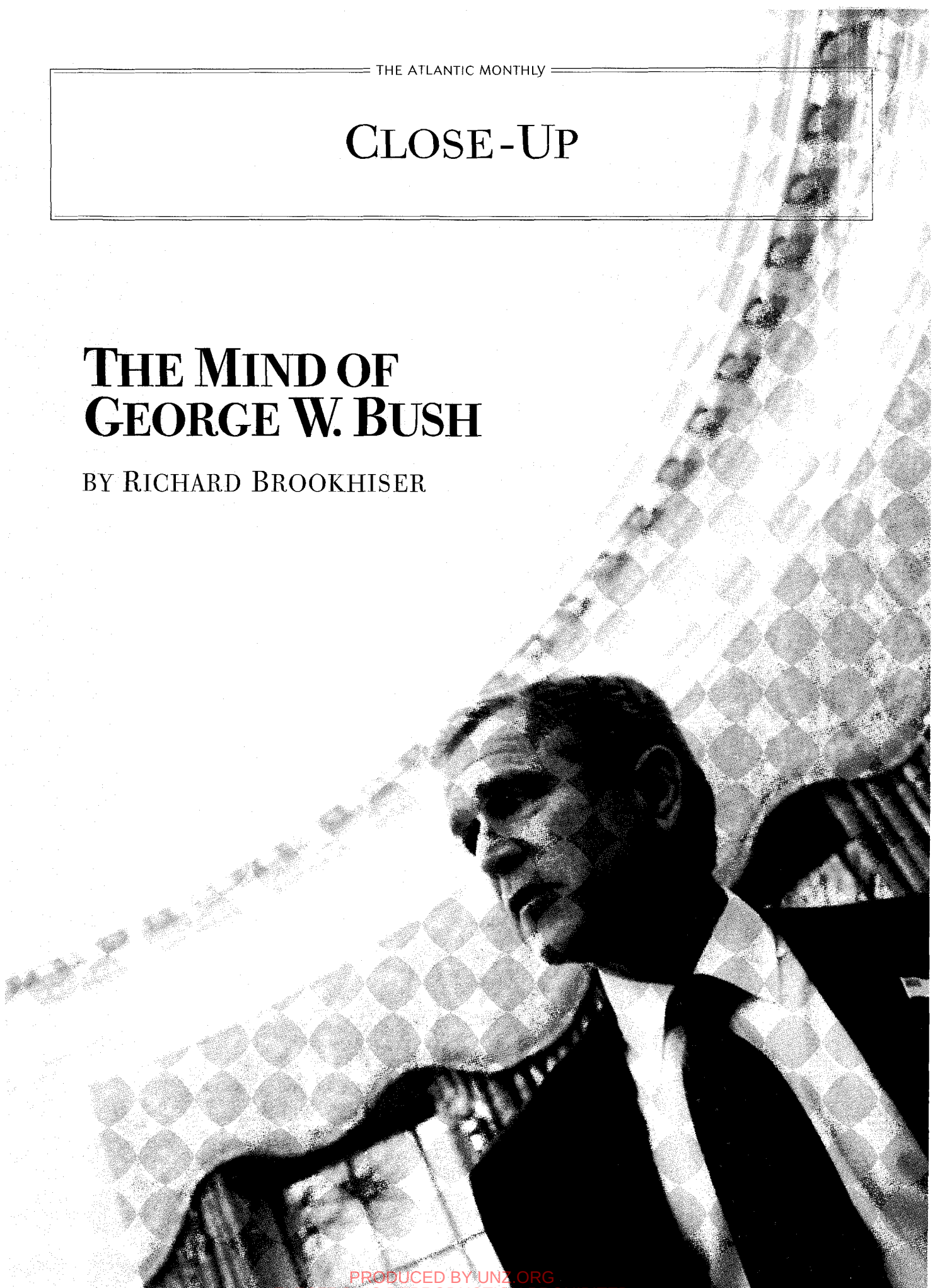
Robert D. Kaplan is a correspondent for The Atlantic and the author of many books, including Surrender or Starve: Travels in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea (1988), to be re-published in paperback this year.

— THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY —

CLOSE-UP

THE MIND OF GEORGE W. BUSH

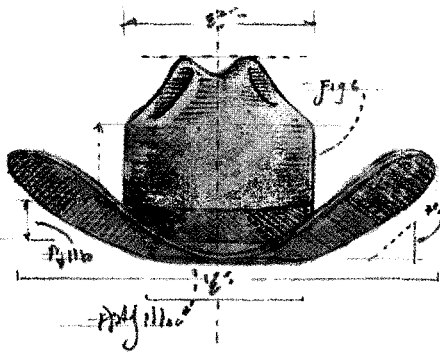
BY RICHARD BROOKHISER



THE MIND OF GEORGE W. BUSH

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER

The decisions—about Iraq, about Korea, about fighting terrorism—that confront this U.S. President may turn out to be as momentous as any an American leader has faced in decades. What capacities does President Bush bring to his decision-making? What limitations hamper his judgment? The author, a journalist and a historian, speaks with people close to the President and probes his private life and public career. Bush is, he concludes, focused, quick to make decisions, persevering, a good judge of character, and, yes, “smart enough” to be an effective President. The unknown quantity is imagination—the imagination to foresee consequences, the imagination to be a wartime President



The powers of the presidency have changed almost beyond recognition since the infancy of the office, when foreign relations were handled by a dozen clerks and diplomats, the armed forces consisted of several thousand soldiers and sailors, and the President himself took months-long summer vacations from the yellow-fever-ravaged capital of Philadelphia or Washington, D.C.

One pattern of presidential decision-making was established early on, however. The process is determined not by the office but by who holds it. The first President, George Washington, a veteran officer and a lifelong performer, led from the front; his decisions, clear and direct, were announced—if not made—in public. Thomas Jefferson, the third President, had a different style; a century and a half before the political scientist Fred I. Greenstein coined the phrase “hidden-hand presidency” to describe Dwight D. Eisenhower’s time in office, Jefferson operated behind a screen of reticence, dinner-table charm, and the feints of congressional front men. The first Presidents also pioneered different ways of taking advice before making decisions. Washington weighed the counsel of often quarrelsome advisers, chiefly Jefferson, his Secretary of State, and Alexander Hamilton, his Treasury Secretary; John Adams, the second President, dealt with a Cabinet that was positively mutinous by firing half its members in his last year in office. In this area, too, Jefferson introduced a new model: the men around him all sang from the same page. His most important advisers—James Madison, at the State Department, and Albert Gallatin, at the Treasury—had worked with him and each other for years, and harmonized in ideology and temperament.

Presidents do not choose from a number of complete decision-making models but gravitate toward one pole or the other on a variety of axes. The axis of presenting decisions gives us extroverts (Truman—“the buck stops here”) or hidden hands (Van Buren, who “rowed to his object with muffled oars”). The axis of advice-taking gives us ringmasters presiding over an endless circus (FDR) or unifiers who deplore or even hate conflict (Nixon). There are Presidents who take in information and assign tasks through an orderly, hierarchical structure (Eisenhower named the first chief of staff), and those who position themselves at the center of converging spokes of counsel (Clinton). There is an axis of learning, which runs from Presidents who seek frankly for guidance to Presidents who know everything to begin with. (Jefferson was considered a polymath—though some weren’t so sure. John Quincy Adams, then a senator, heard Jefferson tell White House dinner guests that he had learned Spanish in only nineteen days,

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using a grammar and a copy of *Don Quixote*. “But,” Adams wrote in his diary, “Mr. Jefferson tells large stories.”) No extreme on any axis guarantees success; there are heroes and dogs at either end of each one. The axis of mental health, along which are ranged the serene (Ford) and the tormented (Nixon again), might seem to be an exception—until we remember the deep depressions of Abraham Lincoln. The possible permutations have yielded almost as many kinds of decision-makers as we have had Presidents.

George W. Bush, No. 43, is not an easy man to write about. He is not contradictory, not flamboyant, and not well-spoken. He thus deprives reporters, as he will deprive historians, of three of the handles—conflict, gestures, words—they automatically reach for to describe their subjects. It is possible, though, to figure out how Bush makes decisions. Nothing reveals a man’s mind, especially the mind of a man who is not articulate, better than the decisions he makes. Here his very consistency helps. To write this article I talked to insiders and outsiders, higher-ups and lower-downs, who have known him in a variety of circumstances: in Texas and in Washington, in business and in government. Their collective portrait was not of a Jekyll and Hyde sort; by and large everything they said fit together. Even when, in my view, almost all of them were mistaken in their reading of the man, they were mistaken in the same way. The picture of Bush deciding is as close as we can easily come to Bush’s mind.

Bush supporters can adduce brainy men (both Adamases and Madison) who have been bad Presidents and less brainy ones (Washington and FDR) who have been excellent.

President George W. Bush came to office with a particular package of traits and experiences. His two most obvious personal traits are humor and seriousness.

Bush’s humor was most in evidence during his campaign and in his early days in the White House. It was not universally admired: Bush has no ability to bathe a crowd in a delighted glow, as Ronald Reagan could. Yet almost all who deal with him, from loyal associates to unsympathetic reporters, testify that one-on-one he is a funny man. Evidently you have to be there. When Bush, speaking to the journalist Tucker Carlson, jeered at the condemned murderer Karla Faye Tucker’s plea for clemency (Carlson’s description: “‘Please,’ Bush whimpers, his lips pursed in mock desperation, ‘don’t kill me,’”), you didn’t want to be there.

Journeys With George, the home movie that the journalist Alexandra Pelosi shot with a camcorder on Bush’s plane during the 2000 campaign, may have been the first treatment that conveyed his humor to outsiders. Bush got into the spirit of Pelosi’s project and mugged without pretension—or shame. The movie shows how Bush makes his humor work for him: he charmed Pelosi and put her at her ease; he also subtly put Pelosi’s colleagues, who were giving her a bit of

a hard time during the campaign, in their place (*they* didn’t get the next President in a home movie).

Bush uses his humor when he makes decisions. Any officeholder transforms those who come into contact with him, and this is especially true of a President. He is not just a person; he is power. But Bush, one journalist says, “gets you to relax so much you say what you know, not what you think he wants to hear.” Another way of putting this is that Bush uses his humor to lower the bar for himself, and thus makes others lower their guard. The White House political adviser Karl Rove, when I asked him to compare his boss to other Presidents, mentioned Eisenhower on the grounds that both men had a “wiliness about being underestimated.” Like Ike, Bush knows that low expectations work to his advantage. Eisenhower used geniality and opaque rhetoric to make people think less of him. Bush clowns.

Finally, Bush’s humor helps him maintain control over his aides. “He keeps people in their place in a friendly way,” says Mitchell Daniels, the director of the Office of Management and Budget. “There are no self-seekers in this group; the general ethos is one that would discourage that.” Condoleezza Rice, Bush’s National Security Advisor, says,

“He will kid people, tease people.” One of the ways he teases the earnest Rice is to call her a mother hen.

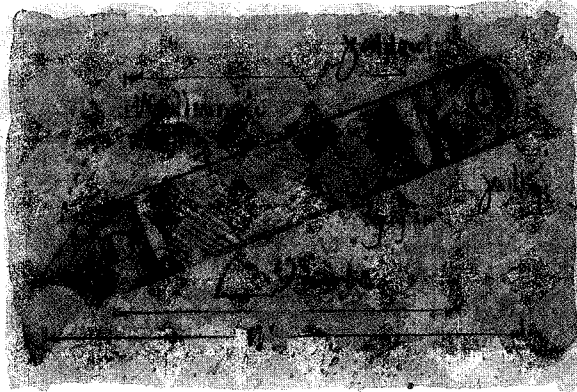
Bush’s seriousness became evident after 9/11, but the signs were there earlier for those who looked. By any normal standard Bush has led a charmed life: he

was born to wealth and prominence, and has carved out an even larger share. He did have a problem, however. Though Bush does not use the A-word, he drank as a young man. Then, at age forty, he stopped. Bill Clinton also had a life touched by addiction—his stepfather’s drinking, his half brother’s drugs. During the 1992 campaign Clinton presented these encounters to Joe Klein and other journalists as Baby Boomer, Al-Anon growth experiences. Bush may think of his own escape somewhat differently.

During the 2000 election each candidate was asked to name a favorite book. Gore said *The Red and the Black*, by Stendhal. Bush often said *The Raven*, by Marquis James—a 1930 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Sam Houston that was last reissued in the 1980s. It is a lushly written biography of the old school, a colorful look at a colorful subject. Houston, of course, is the founding father of Texas—the man who beat Santa Anna at San Jacinto. Houston is still a presence in Austin: he occupied the present governor’s mansion when he held the office, at the end of his career. (He is also a presence in Midland, Texas, where Bush grew up: the young George attended Sam Houston Elementary School and San Jacinto Junior High School.) One of Bush’s

favorite stories about Houston concerns the crisis of the last years of his life, when the governor, a staunch Unionist, refused to take a loyalty oath to the Confederacy. Houston's office was declared vacant, and after he left the state capitol, a crowd showered him with abuse. The lesson Bush draws from that story is the fickleness of instant verdicts and the importance of doing the right thing. It is a tale of heroic principle and of virtue rewarded in the long run: the political nadir of Houston's life became a high point in the judgment of history.

But what may have been equally meaningful to Bush was Houston's personal nadir. In 1829 Houston, then thirty-five, a protégé of Andrew Jackson, and the governor of Tennessee, married a young belle who left him after three months. Houston's reaction was dramatic: he resigned from office, moved to Indian territory (what is now Arkansas), joined the Cherokee nation, and married a part-Cherokee woman. Always a heavy drinker, he began to drink spectacularly. Alexis de Tocqueville ran into Houston during this period; the deracinated wastrel struck him as one of the "unpleasant consequences of popular sovereignty." Yet after three lost years Houston moved to Texas, where he found himself. The victory over alcohol and despair was transformative, and it set the stage for political greatness. Believing that victory over yourself can make you great doesn't mean that you will be; but it sets a goal.



Bush also came to the White House with two kinds of experience—in business and in politics. He attended Harvard Business School from 1973 to 1975, making him the only modern President to have had such training. (Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush ran businesses, but neither went to business school.)

An important effect of going to business school is that it may keep one from going to law school—an especially important effect these days, when so many people in government have legal training. Many law schools and business schools, including Harvard's, use the case method, requiring students to work through historic trials or the problems of actual companies. But they use the method differently. Law school accustoms future lawyers to discerning theoretical constructs, either in past decisions or in legal principles, and applying them to the case at hand. Business school immerses future businessmen in the histories of specific companies, in order to develop problem-solving abilities. Law school worships understanding, business school worships skill. Law-school students scrutinize *what* has been done. If business-school students don't quite learn by

doing, they learn *how* things have been done. Typical of the Harvard Business School's ethos is a line from the textbook *Business Policy*, by C. Roland Christensen, et al., about company presidents: in "the incomparably detailed confusion of a national company" the role and function of a president "cannot possibly be made clear [by] generalization." In a famous lecture at Harvard, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. declared that "the life of the law" was not logic but experience. These days the business school is actually truer to Holmes's dictum than the law school is.

The aspect of business that most interested Bush was organization. One of his favorite courses, according to Bill Minutaglio, the author of *First Son: George W. Bush and the Bush Family Dynasty*, was Human Organization and Behavior. A classmate remembered him as being "pretty concerned about how organizations worked and how people worked in those organizations." When the country was smaller, Presidents did much of the job themselves—writing their own speeches, dispensing patronage, even leading troops (Washington in the Whiskey Rebellion, Madison in the War of 1812). Now that the job requires layers of underlings, and the White House is like a company, a course like the one Bush took is no bad preparation.

After Harvard, Bush went into the oil-exploration business, founding Arbusto Energy, a small company. He was so-so at finding oil, better at selling his business to progressively larger firms. He acquired additional managerial responsibility when he and a group of part-

ners bought the Texas Rangers, in 1989.

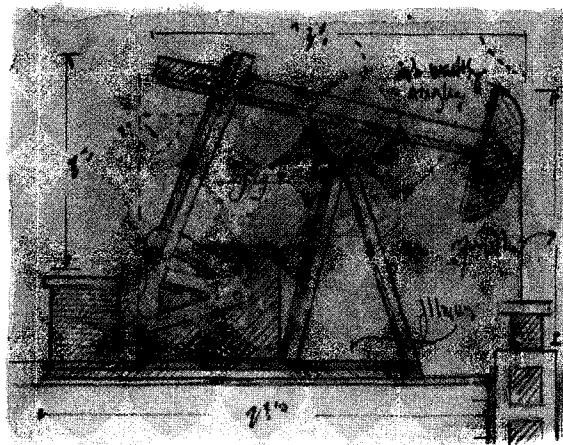
Critics have portrayed Bush's stint with the Rangers as the result of a favor to a politically connected young man by the real movers and shakers (the partners put up \$46 million, of which Bush contributed only \$600,000, largely raised from his oil-business stock). Not surprisingly, the movers and shakers don't see it that way.

Bush's role was to act as Mr. Outside, handling the team's political and public-relations problems. There was a lot for him to do. In order to move from the converted minor-league park in which they were playing, the Rangers had to persuade the town of Arlington, Texas, located midway between Dallas and Fort Worth, to build them a modern stadium, using the revenue from a half-cent increase in the sales tax. The Rangers also had to balance the interests of those twin cities, which hate each other. Bush had "fabulous instincts," Richard Gilder, one of the co-owners, recalls. "He wants to be liked, so he studies people." The reason offered is inadequate; lots of people, from movie stars to unhappy teenagers, want to be liked yet do

not study people. Bush, however, paid attention to those he dealt with. He had to overcome a natural impatience. “If he wasn’t running the meetings,” Gilder says, “which he wasn’t, he couldn’t really sit still. But he became a good listener. He’s not a ball hog.”

Bush had already tested his business-school education in his first important political job—helping his father during the campaign for President in 1988. After the elder Bush won, his son continued to act as an adviser. Bush is “the only President with functional experience of being a White House staffer,” as David Frum, a former speechwriter, told me. “Vice Presidents may know how the very top of the staff system works,” Frum says, but Bush operated at a lower level, albeit with a peerless pipeline to the top. (Access is power, as the Republican strategist Lee Atwater told him.) John Quincy Adams, the only other President to have training as a presidential son, also advised his father, but he could not observe John Adams’s management techniques firsthand: the son spent his father’s presidency in Europe, as a diplomat, and the two communicated only by letter.

George W. Bush got to observe a White House that was notoriously badly run. The chief of staff for much of the elder Bush’s term was John Sununu, the former governor of New Hampshire, who had been given the job in gratitude for his crucial support at the time of the 1988 primaries. Sununu was intelligent but abrasive and willful, picking fights with legislators and journalists: he called one Republican senator, who opposed a budget deal, “insignificant,” and publicly accused a *Washington Post* reporter at a ceremonial bill signing of being a liar. Sununu also tried to shape policy—the great temptation for chiefs of staff, who are supposed to be honest brokers between competing policy advisers but to remain neutral themselves. He did not want to be liked, and he did not study people. When the elder Bush, floundering in the face of a poor economy, decided that Sununu had to go, George W. Bush went to deliver the terminal hint. He told Sununu at the end of November 1991 that he had lost his political support. In the first Bush White House even firings went amiss: Sununu did not take the hint, and had to be asked by the President himself to step aside. (Eleven years later, when the prospective Senate majority leader Trent Lott was going down in flames for praising Senator Strom Thurmond’s Dixiecrat past, the fatal hint bearer was the President’s brother Jeb. Lott responded, either because he had better hearing than Sununu or because the President himself had already given an unmistakable hint



when he said that Lott had apologized “and rightly so.”)

George W. Bush’s first direct experience of political management came when he was elected governor of Texas, in 1994. The main lesson of his tenure in Austin was the importance of focusing on a handful of issues. During the 1995 legislative session these were education reform, welfare, tort law, and the juvenile-justice system. During his second term, in 1999, he pushed for parental notification in cases of abortions requested by minors, and for a tax cut. These issues, when packaged together and presented by Karl Rove, would nicely facilitate a run for the White House. Ralph Reed, the boyish former head of the Christian Coalition, who first met Bush during his Rangers days, was struck by how “focused” and “disciplined” he was as governor.

The governorship of Texas, however, scarcely allows those who hold it to get much done otherwise. It is a figurehead office, a bully pulpit that confers little power. The legislature, which meets only every other year, takes its

cues from the independently elected lieutenant governor. The man who held that job during most of Bush’s tenure was Bob Bullock, a conservative Democrat. Bush met with Bullock during the 1994 campaign, and they hit it off. David Guenther, who edits *The Lone Star Report*, a conservative newsletter that criticized Governor Bush for his tax policies, says that Bullock had a large role in setting Bush’s priorities. “Bullock told him, Here’s what you can get

done, here’s what you can’t get done, here’s what you don’t even try,” Guenther says. “Real cynics say that Bush embraced the agenda Bullock gave him. I would not go so far.” Bush wanted to establish what he could realistically hope to accomplish when he took office. He also saw that Bullock was at loggerheads with the incumbent governor, Ann Richards, a liberal Democrat. Clearly, for reasons of both policy and politics, Bullock was a man worth studying. Governor Bush was not a dynamic leader, but he was effective because he saw the lay of the land and judged how to traverse it.

Bush became President after one of the most bollixed-up presidential elections in American history (interestingly, two other notorious elections, in 1800 and 1824, involved the other father-son presidential pair). How has what he learned from business school, from his father’s White House, from his corporate experiences, and from the Texas statehouse been serving him now that he is the nation’s chief executive?

Following are the markers of Bush's decision-making in the White House so far—the traits he has shown and the factors he pays attention to.

Thriftness with time. Bush begins meetings promptly and runs them briskly, starts and ends his days early, and sets aside time to spend at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. His promptness is partly for public consumption. According to one aide, he often says, "It is important that the President be on time. When I come on time, that shows people I respect them, and that shows discipline."

The discipline is even more important to him. "He feels the fleeting of the presidency, which is made up of a certain number of minutes," Frum says. "That doesn't mean cramming them all with business. You have to sleep, exercise, and keep your relationships functioning well enough to keep you sane. But then there are only so many minutes left over. Every time you let someone ramble [in a meeting], you destroy a minute." All Presidents have limited time in office—John Quincy Adams wrote of the job's "perpetual motion"—and they all recognize this fact intermittently. "The key to discipline," Frum adds, "is recognizing it all the time."

The team. Newt Gingrich, formerly speaker of the House and now a consultant, has an avid interest in both history and management; when he gave a reading list to the Republican freshmen of the 104th Congress, half the books were on American

history (the *Federalist Papers*, Tocqueville) and half were on management techniques. "Bush," he says, "has a very disciplined sense of himself as a team leader." Rove agrees. "I had read [the management guru] Peter Drucker, but I'd never seen Drucker until I saw Bush in action." What do these buzzwords—"team leader," "Drucker"—mean in practice?

Bush was determined not to reproduce the fireworks of his father's staff. "The people who control the channels of communication [in the new Bush White House]," Frum says, "have their egos carefully under control. They have fewer psychodramas than any staff since the invention of staffs." The average newspaper-reading non-political junkie may not even know the name of Bush's chief of staff (Andrew Card). That is just fine by Bush.

Bush's advisers do not rat each other out in public. Rove says, "People told me before I went to Washington that the White House would be a snake pit. Leaking and backbiting just come with the territory." But, he claims, Bush's advisers "can go to the Oval Office and advocate a perspective diametrically opposed to the point of view of the person on the sofa across from [them]." If the decision goes against you, Rove says, "you can link arms and go on,

and be certain that your [losing] view won't appear in the paper." He adds, in a nod to the human condition: "Or at least be reasonably certain."

The men and women Bush has put in positions of substance are either Texans, like Rove, or veterans of the first Bush Administration or the Ford Administration. In picking Richard Cheney to be his Vice President, Bush made another correction of his father, who chose Senator Dan Quayle as a running mate. Quayle was picked for his youth. He turned out to be a man of ideas, but his penchant for flubs made him seem more callow than energetic. Cheney was picked for his experience, which was thought to outweigh even the risks of his heart condition.

The reach back to the Ford Administration, in the persons of Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, is interesting, because Gerald Ford learned the value of a good team only on the job. He took office, after Nixon's resignation, promising to be his own chief of staff. But the storm that followed his pardon of Nixon, which was caused in part by the abrupt manner in which the pardon was announced, showed him the error of his ways. The first chief of staff Ford chose after acknowledging his mistake was

Rumsfeld; when Rumsfeld became Secretary of Defense for the first time, Ford replaced him with Cheney. Significantly, Bush largely passed over the Reagan Administration in his talent search (Colin Powell began his ascent under Reagan but came into his own under the

elder Bush). Reagan's inner circle was divided between true believers and convictionless operators. Bush wanted solid junior managers.

Q&L. Bush manages his team by questioning and listening. After he has put people at ease with his humor and his low-key manner, Bush wants information. Robert D. Kaplan, an *Atlantic* correspondent, whom Bush has questioned about the Balkans and the Near East, says that Bush "never asked a question that got the conversation off track." Talking with Bush, Kaplan says, is the opposite of punditry. "Guests on talk shows are asked things they can't possibly know. Some retired officer will be asked 'Will Saddam Hussein go to war?' Bush is different. He doesn't get into global bull sessions; he wants your knowledge."

Bush wants your knowledge even if you disagree with him. Darla St. Martin, an officer of the National Right to Life Committee, who was introduced to Bush in 1988 by Lee Atwater, sees this trait from the vantage of her special interest. "On abortion, his father has one view [pro-life] and his mother has another [pro-choice]. That may be a reason he respects people even if he disagrees with them."

**Asked to name a favorite book,
Bush often cites *The Raven*, a
biography of Sam Houston.
Houston's victory over alcohol and
despair was transformative.**

Bush is capable of stirring things up. "He can listen to a roomful of consensus and say no," Mitchell Daniels, of the OMB, says. "He's often roughest when things seem too neat and pre-packaged. He will ask [the opinion of] a person who hasn't spoken up. You better be ready with a point of view." Rice agrees: "He'll say something to provoke." During the war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan he pressed his advisers relentlessly asking, "If we don't have victory by winter, what do we do?" Ralph Reed says that "some people don't want to hear what they don't want to hear," but Bush is different. "I don't know where it comes from. I've been doing this a long time. I know it's unusual."

The issue of stem-cell research, which came at Bush fast, fueled by the pace of technological innovation, offers a good case study of his open Q&L style. In 1996 Congress passed the Dickey-Wicker Amendment, a pro-life measure that barred the federal government from funding research in which human embryos were destroyed (strict pro-lifers view embryos as persons, just like fetuses, newborns, and the ailing old). In 1999 the Clinton Administration's Department of Health and Human Services interpreted the amendment to mean that the federal government could fund research on embryos as long as private money paid for their destruction. By the time Bush was inaugurated, in January of 2001, scientists were arguing that experiments on embryonic stem-cell tissue could help to find cures for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. They were joined by a chorus of relatives of the afflicted, including Nancy Reagan, and by many otherwise pro-life Republican lawmakers, who saw such research as an opportunity to do good.

Bush is not a scientist. To address the stem-cell problem, he would have to rely heavily on expert advice. But because he had not had a stem-cell team during the campaign (the issue was not then in play), he had to create one from scratch. Pro-life lobbyists—people like Darla St. Martin—were available. The opinions of Republican senators such as Senators Orrin Hatch and Bill Frist (each of whom supported at least some types of stem-cell research) were out there as political givens; the opinion of an iconic figure like Nancy Reagan would have to be taken into account. Bush also turned to academic pro-life ethicists—for example, Leon Kass, of the University of Chicago.

In August of 2001 Bush revealed his thoughts in a televised speech from Crawford. He announced that he would create a President's Council on Bioethics, headed by Kass. The presidential council or commission is traditionally a place to send awkward decisions and unwelcome responsi-

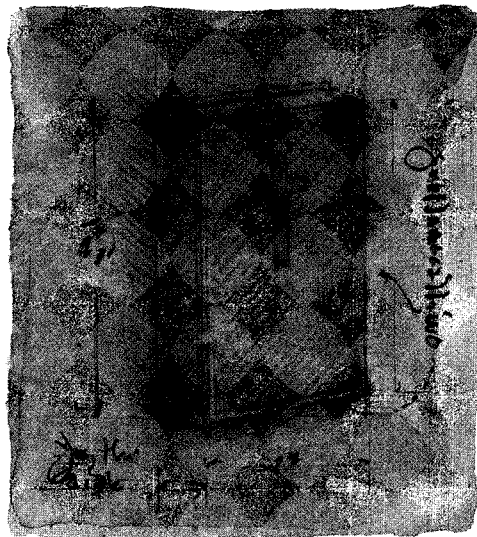
bilities. But Bush's speech gave the council clear guidelines on stem-cell research.

Bush acknowledged the benefits that researchers sought, and the utilitarian calculations that would allow them to seek those benefits. If frozen embryos "are going to be destroyed anyway," he said, "shouldn't they be used for a greater good?" But he rejected a proposal by Bill Frist that federally funded research be allowed on certain newly destroyed embryos. In Bush's view, embryos fell within the definition of human life—"a sacred gift from our creator." He decided, however, that the federal government could rightly fund research on existing stem-cell lines, "where the life-and-death decision has already been made." Some pro-lifers were not happy with this exception: the National Conference of Catholic Bishops called it "morally unacceptable." But Bush would not try to fix what he viewed as mistakes of the past; he would only try to prevent new ones.

"Many people," Bush said, "are finding that the more they know about stem-cell research, the less certain they are about the right ethical and moral conclusions." The puzzlement that Bush imputed to "many people" clearly reflected his own process of sorting through the issue. He had assembled a team of advisers, from his world but as sophisticated as possible; he had considered their (conflicting) counsel; and he had found a clear, though not universally popular, position. Another President might have ducked the problem by following the emerging consensus of the country, or of his own base. Bush handled it like a manager—staffing it out and then making his own decision.

"Instinct." Almost everyone calls Bush an instinctive decision-maker, including Bush himself. In an interview for *Bush at War*, Bob Woodward's 2002 sketch of the defeat of the Taliban, Bush told Woodward, "I'm not a textbook player. I'm a gut player." Both Bush and his aides tend to exalt instinct; this propensity can seem like a rationalization, a cover for his lack of more obvious qualifications, such as intellect conventionally measured.

The perception of Bush's intellect is hobbled by prejudices—ours and his. Bush went to elite schools, Andover and Yale before Harvard Business School, though one can cruise through such institutions without learning much. What does Bush know? Like his father, he mangles spoken English. In the shorthand of journalists, this at first became CAFFES=DUMB. Journalists who covered him were then surprised to learn that he reads steadily, mostly historical biographies and mysteries. (During the 2000 campaign



Bush and the *New York Times* reporter Frank Bruni traded favorites of the latter genre; Bruni recommended *The Concrete Blonde*, Bush *The Zebra-Striped Hearse*.) But since history and mystery together form the stereotypical reading of businessmen, they do not register on journalists as markers of intelligence unless the politician who reads them goes out of his way to send signals of culture; JFK, the Ian Fleming fan, attended the concerts his wife organized; this is the kind of thing that Bush, obsessed with time, resolutely refuses to do.

Bush's pre-presidential experience was limited in one obvious way: he had no knowledge of the world, though that is an occupational hazard of governors. Unlike Vice Presidents, congressmen, or generals who have fought foreign enemies, governors know their states and Washington, little else. Governors of Texas are more worldly than most, because they must deal with Mexico and Mexican immigrants, and during Bush's presidential campaign his advisers argued, with straight faces, that this was experience enough. It is a limitation that American voters seem to be comfortable with, since three of the past four Presidents—Carter, Reagan, and Clinton—came to the White House from statehouses.

It is easy for Bush supporters to construct a counter-mythology of brainy men who have been bad Presidents and less brainy ones who have been excellent. In the former category fall both Adamses and James Madison; for evidence of the latter they can cite Oliver Wendell

Holmes's quip about FDR ("second-class intellect ... first-class temperament") or Aaron Burr's judgment of Washington ("One who could not spell a sentence of common English").

Gingrich cuts through the instinct talk. "Bush has thought systematically about leaders his whole life," he says, "and he has a very wide repertoire of experiences." When Bush encounters new people or situations, Gingrich says, "he cues off things he probably doesn't even remember" from past experiences. Gingrich offers Bush's favorable judgment of Russian President Vladimir Putin as an example of his ability to size someone up rapidly. Better to say that he is not an instinctive decider but a fast one.

Providence. In one debate among Republican hopefuls during the 2000 election cycle the candidates were asked to pick a political philosopher important to their lives. Steve Forbes, who answered first, named John Locke, and explained why he thought Locke was important. Bush, who answered after Forbes, picked Jesus Christ, saying, "He changed my heart." A couple of the remaining Republicans began their answers by testifying that they, too, thought highly of Jesus.

It was a moment made for H. L. Mencken, but it exposed, not for the first time, a truth about Bush: he did not give up drink at age forty by himself; he believes he had the help of Jesus. He continues to believe that life is ruled and sustained by God.

Bush's faith makes "his sense of history very hard for secular intellectuals to understand," according to Gingrich. Given the care with which his associates discuss his beliefs, there must be a lot of secular intellectuals in the Bush Administration. "The great mystery in his decision-making," Frum says, "is the role of religion. When Bush says, 'I'll pray on this,' it's not a figure of speech." Mitchell Daniels believes that faith gives Bush "a certain serenity," as if he trusts that "history will take care of itself if he pursues the right policies." Daniels is "tempted," he says, to call the force that Bush sees guiding history "Providence," but he is reluctant to do so: "I wouldn't want anyone to over-read [the word]," he says. Bush's well-wishers—at least those who are not as aggressive as Gingrich—worry that if they speak bluntly about his faith, it will put people in mind of the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Bush is not a culture warrior like many conservatives of that period, who thanked God

for their enemies. But he is blunt, and specific, about his faith. "Providence" might strike him as too indefinite a word, smacking of the gentlemanly theological evasions of the Anglo-American Enlightenment (of John Locke, for instance).

Practically, Bush's faith means that he does not tolerate, or even recognize, ambiguity: there is an all-knowing God who decrees certain behaviors, and leaders must obey. Such beliefs, however much they may alienate him from opinion-makers, are part of his bond with one other leader—the devout Anglican Tony Blair.

Follow-through. One of the most important aspects of making a decision is making sure that it is carried out.

Bush believes in what is known in business as single-point accountability. "He does not want to know that a committee or a consortium is working together to coordinate a solution," Daniels says. "He wants one organization, or one person, to have responsibility; he wants to know who he can call. I can't tell you how alien this is to the federal government, which is marvelous at evading it."

To monitor the people or organizations responsible, Bush keeps track of certain details—ideally, not so many that he becomes a micro-manager, but enough to keep those he is managing alert. From 9/11 until January of 2002 many officials who had no direct connection to the war on terror lost contact with Bush. When he began meeting with them

"The great mystery in Bush's decision-making is the role of religion," a former aide explains. "When he says 'I'll pray on this,' it's not a figure of speech."

again, he had “a stream of informed questions about the innards of their departments,” Daniels recalls. “He makes it his business to know a little bit about everything.”

Bush knows that following through can require patience. This is new for him: when he was with the Rangers, and in his father’s White House, he was just learning patience. Though he may still see the fundamental issues in black and white, he can now wait to achieve his goals. “He gives things time to work,” Rice says. “He understands, probably better than his advisers, that there is a rhythm to things.”

Bush’s decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty, and the way he put that decision into effect, provide an archetypal example of his relentless follow-through. The treaty was a three-decades-old arrangement designed to ensure the mutual vulnerability of the superpowers during the Cold War. Conservatives had opposed it since the Reagan Administration, because it prevented all but basic research on Star Wars technology. Bush shared their opposition. How would he act on it?

In September of 1999 candidate Bush laid down a personal marker in a speech at the Citadel. He pledged that he would “defend the American people against missiles and terror” and that he would “at the earliest possible date ... deploy anti-ballistic missile systems ... to guard against attack and blackmail.” He would propose amendments to the ABM treaty to permit this, but if Russia refused them, he would give notice, as the treaty allowed, that the United States would pull out.

Once Bush was elected, he put strong proponents of missile defense in key positions—Rice at the National Security Council, Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz at the Defense Department, John Bolton, as the undersecretary for arms control, at the State Department. He then asked for plans for what should be built and how the decision should be presented to the world. By May of 2001 he was ready with another speech, to the National Defense University, in which he offered Russia a “new cooperative relationship” based on missile defense and smaller nuclear stockpiles in both countries.

Stroking Russia was the key to persuading reluctant Americans and European allies alike that Bush’s plans were not cowboy unilateralism. If the Russians did not object, how could anyone else? Through the summer and fall Bush met with President Vladimir Putin. The Russians were surprised at the scope of the testing that the Americans proposed; by December of 2001, when the United States gave notice that it would pull out of the ABM treaty in six months, Russia still had not given its assent. But in May of last year Putin agreed to missile-defense cooperation. The ABM treaty effectively

expired the next month, without a whimper. “We thought Russia would throw a tantrum and then get on with it,” one congressional staffer told me. “They didn’t even throw a tantrum.” Bush’s soft hard sell—soft in its manner, hard in its persistence—had worked.

Neither Bush’s black-and-white view of the world nor his obsession with time makes him hasty. He identified the ABM treaty as a bad thing in the fall of 1999 and spent two and a half years withdrawing from it.

No decision-making style is without its limitations. No President’s approach would work for anyone else; no President’s approach works perfectly in all cases for him. What are Bush’s limitations?

Restricted habitat. Bush may be comfortable with reservations and disagreement, and may probe for them among his advisers. But the disagreements he will encounter are limited by the politics of the advisers he has picked, Republicans who range from moderately liberal to moderately conservative (Colin Powell to Karl Rove). Those people, in turn, reflect the scope of his thoughts and inclinations. Bush may

be a free-range animal, but he has a habitat, in which he stays. If he needs to know some facts that his advisers don’t know, he can discover them. But if he needs to think some thoughts that they can’t, he may have a hard time doing it.

Consider Saudi Arabia.

To a moderate liberal like Powell, Saudi Arabia seems to be a non-radical Arab state, possibly a partner in resolving the Israel-Palestine issue. Moderate conservatives like Cheney and Rumsfeld would remember it as a strategic partner during the Cold War and the Gulf War. Texans would think of the Saudis as fellow oilmen. But if the Saudis, in addition to being these things, are breeders of terrorists and bankrollers of anti-American ideology worldwide, how will Bush’s advisers help him see that? They generally won’t—and generally haven’t.

The first member of Bush’s circle to break ranks and go public with criticism was the Princeton academic John DiIulio, a Roman Catholic Democrat who had advised Bush on the role of faith-based institutions in welfare. Last October DiIulio sent a 3,400-word letter to Ron Suskind, a reporter for *Esquire*, which was quoted in part in the magazine, and in its entirety in the Drudge Report. DiIulio hadn’t at all liked his experience with the Bush White House, which he found to be populated by political hacks (“Mayberry Machiavellis”) who needed “more serious policy fiber” in their diet. It is hard, DiIulio wrote, “for policy-minded staff ... to get much West Wing traction, or even get a non-trivial hearing.”

Bush may be a free-range animal, but he has a habitat, in which he stays. If he needs to think some thoughts that his advisers can’t, he may have a hard time doing it.

The memo certainly tells us that its author found it hard to get a hearing. DiIulio's picture of White House drones both ignoring and misunderstanding his ideas may well be accurate, however. Ignorance and incomprehension are the norms in every White House. The government and the world are so protean that no polymaths or even whole administrations are capable of entirely filtering the torrent of information and events washing over them. The best a President can hope to do is identify a handful of problems and, by bearing down on them, accomplish a handful of things.

Phantom framework. Bush's strictly defined mental horizons don't necessarily amount to a clearly expressed set of political principles. It is, of course, one of the mantras of his associates that Bush, unlike some other modern Presidents, has such principles. (Richard Nixon was famously indifferent to both the principles and the details of domestic policy: he told the historian Theodore H. White that the country needed a President for foreign affairs, but that the home front could take care of itself.) More specific than Bush's reliance on Providence, his principles supposedly form a framework for the decisions he makes. His "framework" of ideas, Rove says, "colors how he reacts" to problems as they arise. "He lays out the strategic ground," Rice says, as if to say, "Here is the ground on which we're playing."

Bush may indeed have a framework of ideas that guides him. Isn't this all we expect of a decision-maker? Not quite. A leader is most effective when his policy framework is evident to others (Reagan is the recent classic example). Then they know what to expect of him; they better understand what he is saying as he says it. The framework that Rove and Rice allude to is obscured by Bush's unwillingness or inability to theorize. Bush makes his ideas clear about each decision as he faces it, much as Rice described. But in the absence of a need to decide, what does his framework of ideas amount to? One of Bush's failures is instructive here. On December 6 Bush dismissed Paul O'Neill, his Treasury Secretary (yet another Ford Administration veteran). O'Neill had a penchant for shooting his mouth off, and the economy was in sad shape, suggesting the need for a scapegoat. But O'Neill also fell into a trap unintentionally prepared for him by Bush.

Whereas the first great Treasury Secretaries—Hamilton, Gallatin—created the economic policy of the new nation, today a Treasury Secretary's main job is to act as an advocate

for the President's economic policy. Bush's policy has been one of steady tax cuts. After his inauguration he proposed a \$1.3 trillion tax cut, spread over ten years. After 9/11 Bush proposed a stimulus package that allowed businesses to write off depreciation of their equipment more quickly. This January he proposed to stop taxing the dividends that stocks pay to individuals. Together these cuts will be the largest since Ronald Reagan's income-tax cuts in 1981. But there is a difference between the two Presidents. Reagan was messianic about tax cuts, campaigning for them, identifying himself with them. Bush cuts taxes—but he has not laid out a systematic, ideological case for what he is up to or how far he intends to go. Bush's reticence set up O'Neill's fatal mistake.

It was the dividend tax cut that did O'Neill in. Last November, O'Neill, traveling in Britain, told the *Financial Times* that his priority was tax simplification. "Far from promising a hefty tax cut," the paper wrote, "he said the reforms that were most likely ... were 'minimally controversial and not very costly.'" O'Neill did acknowledge that the ultimate decision was not his: In time "[the President will] decide what he wants to do, and we'll try and get it done," he told the *Financial Times*. But O'Neill did not seem to know that the decision had already been made. Bush had warmed to the idea of abolishing the dividend tax at an economic summit in August at Baylor University, in Waco, where the popular investment broker Charles Schwab had proposed it. When Bush read what O'Neill was saying in Britain, according to one economist who has known Bush since the 1980s, he "went berserk." "Berserk" does not sound right—Bush (unlike Nixon and Clinton) is not a tantrum

thrower. But "ticked off" is certainly in the repertoire of his reactions. The man who should have been his advocate was sending contradictory signals. O'Neill would have to go.

But it was not entirely O'Neill's fault that he was out of sync with his chief. Bush's phantom framework must share the blame. O'Neill did not have a sense of where, specifically, Bush was going on tax policy because Bush had not conveyed one during his first two years in office. A ten-year cut in income-tax rates and a break on business expenses do not necessarily predict a dividend-tax cut. If Bush's economic ideas had been clearer, his Treasury Secretary might have been clearer about them.

"Compassionate conservatism" is another example of a phantom framework, a framework that does not frame.



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Bush has since the early days of his presidential campaign defined himself as a compassionate conservative. This was in part rhetorical positioning—signaling that he was different from Ronald Reagan, whom liberals saw as harsh beneath a smiling face, or Newt Gingrich, whom they saw as harsh beneath a harsh face. In practice compassionate conservatism has meant allowing faith-based organizations to perform certain federally sponsored good works. One program, however, does not define a world view—and even that program has yet to get off the ground.

In the real world compassionate conservatism so far resembles what the historian Forrest McDonald has called good issues, which from a politician's point of view have "little substance" and are "ethically neutral" but can "inflame voters as if [they] were a primal moral cause." (McDonald was referring to the politics of the 1830s and 1840s, when "good issues ... included protective tariffs and the recharter of the Bank of the United States; emphatically not good issues, because they were genuinely moral and potentially explosive, were slavery and Indian policy.") Perhaps by the end of Bush's Administration we will know what "compassionate conservatism" means; perhaps not.

Lack of imagination? Bush has intelligence, energy, and humility, but does he have imagination? Winston Churchill didn't learn about Adolf Hitler by questioning journalists, or by sizing Hitler up in person. Hitler and Churchill almost met in the summer of 1932, when Hitler was rising to power but still half a year away from achieving it. Churchill, in contrast, was out of office and seemed unlikely ever to return. Churchill was in Germany, touring old battlegrounds for a biography of his ancestor the Duke of Marlborough. Ernst Hanfstaengl, a Nazi hanger-on, ran into him in a Munich hotel and tried to set up a meeting with Hitler, but Churchill made a pro-Jewish remark that scotched it. Even without a meeting, Churchill intuited that this German politician was a dynamic and disastrous force. Perhaps he intuited it because he shared Hitler's dynamism, and at least some of his impulses. "I admire men who stand up for their country in defeat," he wrote in his war memoirs, "even though I am on the other side."

Bush thinks in prose. Can he hear music?

No other President has faced anything quite like 9/11. Pearl Harbor was militarily disastrous but not devastating to the economy, or so destructive of civilian life. During the War of 1812 the British captured Washington and burned the White House; the United

States, however, had arguably brought that war on itself, out of greed for Canada. But New York City had not been attacked since 1776, when General George Washington was responsible for defending it and failed.

Senator Charles Schumer, of New York, saw Bush make one early decision that quickly became public knowledge. Schumer and other senators from afflicted states met with Bush in the Oval Office on Thursday, September 13. "I told him how emotional it was in the city," Schumer says. "I had not been able to find my daughter, who went to Stuyvesant High School [near Ground Zero], for six hours. I told him about the smell of death in the air." "That is why New York needs twenty billion dollars," Schumer told the President. He says now, "I expected him to say 'Let me get back to you,' or 'Let's start off with three or four billion,' or 'Send me a memo'—the usual political things. 'New York really needs twenty billion?' he said. I said, 'Yes, sir.' He said, 'You got it.'"

In the ensuing tugging and hauling over the \$20 billion,

Schumer never joined his fellow New York Democrats in charging Bush with betrayal, because he believed that Bush had meant what he said. "He convinced me that he felt the pain I felt and that he had thought it through. Here is a man who, on one minute's reflection, commits to something." Schumer goes on, sounding a bit like Gingrich, "In the parlors they say he's stupid. That's nonsense. He's a bright man. Is he the smartest who has ever been President? No, but he's smart enough."

This article is not a war report.

But the war on terrorism has thrown

Bush's decision-making style into sharp relief, even as it has raised the stakes. "You are who you are," Rove says, "and you either live up to the moment or you don't." (Rove cites Lincoln's predecessor, James Buchanan, who failed to preserve the Union, as an example of someone who didn't.) But great and terrible events offer great choices. Thomas Gray evoked an Oliver Cromwell "guiltless of his country's blood," slumbering in a rural churchyard because never called to England's stage. One can imagine the lives that great men might have had in the absence of their decisive tests: Abraham Lincoln, railroad lobbyist; Ulysses S. Grant, failed businessman; Winston Churchill, scribbling back-bencher. Sir George Washington, knighted at age sixty as a loyal and industrious subject of the United Provinces, sometimes takes out his militia uniform from the French and Indian War and regrets that he never won a commission in His Majesty's regular army ...

The attack called upon Bush's considerable capacity to focus. He rehearsed his September 20 speech to the joint



session of Congress three times, the draft mutating with each read-through. For the second rehearsal a piñata of domestic issues had been hung from the text. The logic of that addition harked back to his father's Administration: despite his victory in the Gulf War, the elder Bush lost the country's confidence by failing to attend to domestic issues. George W. Bush's advisers did not want him to repeat the mistake. He looked at the paper through the half glasses he wears for reading and said, "Take it out." Yet on one occasion he relaxed his usual discipline. When he went to New York on September 14 and met privately at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center with the families of the victims, the clock ran unwatched.

In the first hundred days of the war Bush's decision-making style clearly served him well. Woodward's *Bush at War* is a catalogue of self-serving revelations by members of the Administration, but the vignettes of Bush that emerge are consistent with one another, and with his past. Bush led a team with some divergences of opinion, but not major ones. He had the patience to follow a strategy through ("boots on the ground"—that is, Americans in Afghanistan—before winter) and a sense of urgency that prodded those under him to get their acts together and get it done. He had to take expert advice, since he lacked both the military experience of a Washington or an Eisenhower, and the civilian war-time responsibility of a Churchill (who had been First Lord of the

Admiralty in World War I). At the same time, he had to take charge. Two moments stand out. On September 12 Cheney asked Bush if there should be a war cabinet of his principal advisers, to hash out options and present them to him; it might streamline decision-making, he said. Bush replied that he would run important meetings himself: that was a commander in chief's function, not to be delegated. A month later, on October 15, eight days after the American bombing had begun, Bush told the attendees of such a meeting that they were losing their focus. "There's been too much discussion of post-conflict Afghanistan," he is reported to have said. In other words, don't everybody forget to win.

Bush's greatest strength as a wartime leader is strategic and personal clarity. The rapid decisions, forced on him by disaster, that everyone mislabels "instinctual" have created a framework that in this case is solid, not a phantom. He saw, seemingly immediately, that America was in a war, and that fighting it was to be the mission of his life.

He has been mostly well served by his team. Powell, Rice, and Rumsfeld have different approaches and emphases, and Bush turns from one to another like a carpenter going

to his toolbox. An acquaintance who has known Bush for twenty years supplied a different metaphor: "Bush knows which senior vice-presidents to send to which meetings."

But has Bush stretched his team and himself far enough? After learning of Pearl Harbor, Churchill remembered a comment by an older politician, Edward Grey, who had compared the United States to "a gigantic boiler." Grey said, "Once the fire is lighted under it there is no limit to the power it can generate." Bush has chosen to tap only a fraction of America's power. We are essentially fighting a war in peacetime; most of our casualties have been civilians. The reason for Bush's relative restraint is obvious. Mobilizing for total war is economically and morally disorienting, a dire course that should be taken only in extreme necessity. We must wait to see if Bush's estimate of the force needed is correct.

Does Bush have the imagination to lead a great war? And even if he does, can he communicate it? The day before Abraham Lincoln's first inauguration, in the thick of the secession crisis, William Seward, who was to be the new Secretary of State, observed that "the President has a curious vein of sentiment running through his thought, which is his most valuable mental attribute." This is one of the shrewdest

remarks ever made about Lincoln. That vein of sentiment changed the logician of the 1860 campaign into the visionary who delivered the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural. Seward's remark is also one of the most astonishing ever made about Lincoln, because it

Leaders like Churchill and Lincoln have drawn on their powers of imagination to lift themselves to greatness. Bush thinks in prose. Can he hear music?

came at a time when Lincoln's sentiment had not yet shown itself, and when few people, even among his supporters, had full confidence in him. Lincoln struck most people as a lanky rube, no doubt sharp but quite untried. The next day Charles Francis Adams Jr., the grandson and great-grandson of Presidents, observed the inauguration and wrote afterward that the outgoing President Buchanan was "undeniably ... more presentable."

Time will judge Bush, as it judged Lincoln. The story of Lincoln's inauguration, like the story of Sam Houston leaving Austin, is hopeful: virtue temporarily unrecognized. But if virtue can be unappreciated, so can mediocrity be overpraised. Bush's approval rating after 9/11 was sky-high, but we must wait for the long run to see how effective his decision-making is. The verdict of history will settle the question of Bush's mind. If he prevails, Americans will want to understand how he did it. If he fails, he and the decisions that misfired will be disgraced and dismissed. ■

Richard Brookhiser, a senior editor at National Review, has written biographies of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Adams family. His book Gentleman Revolutionary: Gouverneur Morris, the Rake Who Wrote the Constitution, will be published in June.

WE HAVE A POPE!

A short story

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Illustration by Steve Brodner

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Renard does not normally write about his clients. I'm a PR guy. I do not go in for titles like "strategic communicator," as do many of my colleagues in the Washington, D.C., spindustry. At any rate, writing about clients in a national magazine is not part of the job. The idea, greatly boiled down, is to make them look good. But since there's been so much in the media recently about my role in trying to help elect an American Pope, the record could use a little, shall we say, straightening.

Two months ago I was in my office on K Street, this being where my professional ilk tend to have their offices, brainstorming how to persuade a Senate subcommittee to grant one of my clients a tax deduction for his herd of buffalo, on the grounds that they emit less methane than cows, when my assistant, LaMoyné, buzzed me to inform me that Bernard Baroom was on the phone.

"The Bernard Baroom?" I said. LaMoyné sighed. "No, the *other* Bernard Baroom." LaMoyné—he's not French, he's from Indiana—is capable of attitude, but he is efficient and more or less runs Renard Strategic Planning International, that being the name of my company. We have mailboxes in Toronto, Geneva, and Kuala Lumpur, which makes us international. We're planning to expand. At any rate, I took the call from Bernard Baroom.

He dispensed with the usual pleasantries. It's my experience of billionaire financiers—not that I have had nearly enough experience of them—that they come right to the point, time being money. His car would pick me up in ten minutes. He didn't bother to inquire whether I was available. A billionaire financier expects a PR man to be available at any time, even if you are in the middle of sex or a Botox injection.

LaMoyné was impressed. He'd seen the Baroom mansion in Upperburg, Virginia, featured in the pages of *Opulent Domicile* magazine.

"Twelve pages," he said. "A bit baronial for my *goût*."

"Goo?"

"*Goût*. Taste."

He does this, LaMoyné, which drives me nuts; but as

I say, he's efficient. "Private chapel. Don't see many of *those* anymore. Bet there's a dungeon, too. Strange duck, that one."

"He's the fourteenth richest duck in the United States, according to *Forbes*. Call the mink ranchers and tell them I've been summoned to a meeting at the White House." That always impresses them.

The Minnesota Mink Ranchers Association was a client. The anti-fur people were sneaking in at night and shaving the minks. I was gearing up a media campaign to highlight just how awful minks really are. Nature doesn't come redder in tooth and claw, as the saying goes, than mink. Vicious little devils. This is the part of the job I really enjoy—the learning about different things.

Baroom's Cadillac Sixteen was waiting for me. You know you're off to a good start when they send a quarter-million-dollar chauffeur-driven car for you.

It was an hour's ride to the Baroom abode, the last ten minutes spent going up the driveway. Bernard Baroom had started out with condom dispensers in public men's rooms and was now the chairman of three companies listed on the stock exchange. His private secretary was English. "Ah, Mr. *Renard*, Mr. *Baroom* is expecting you." Recently rich Americans love that. Well, I suppose all Americans are recently rich, more or less.

Mr. *Baroom* was in his study—one of those walnut-and-mahogany jobs with this very solemn feeling to it, as if it was designed to deliver grave news in. There were these religious-theme paintings on the walls: Madonnas, a Saint Sebastian—the one stuck full of arrows who provided inspiration for all those Italian painters. Above him was one showing Jesus driving the money changers from the Temple. The nameplate on it said EL GRECO, which is Spanish for "Ten Million." My kind of client.

Baroom did not rise from his chair. The very rich are different from you and me, as the late F. Scott Fitzgerald observed: they don't bother to get up when you walk into the room.

He was reading a thick file marked RENARD. He said without looking up, "You used to work for Nick Naylor."



Nick Naylor, of course, is a legend. It was Nick who mounted the final public-relations battle in behalf of the tobacco industry. It was a magnificent last stand, the Little Bighorn of that war. Nick went down, but gloriously. After he got out of prison, he moved to California and now represents movie stars. Not my goo, but who could blame him? He'd earned his lounge chair by the pool. A lot of people in Washington pretend they never knew him. Not Rick Renard. I learned a lot from Nick. More or less everything, really, when you come right down to it. I'm proud to have worked for him.

"Well," I said, "that was a long time ago."

He closed the file and shook his head. "Maybe that explains why I can't find a single instance in your entire curriculum vitae where you let something as trivial as principle get in the way."

I figured that Bernard Baroom had not sent his \$250,000 to fetch me so that he could lecture me on ethics. A smile spread across his face like lard melting in a skillet.

"Mr. Renard, I have made a lot of money in my life. A tremendous amount of money."

I wasn't quite sure how to respond. "That's just great, sir!" didn't feel quite right.

"Now I want to give something back."

Aha. I do a little teaching on the side, at Martha Washington University School of Strategic Planning, and I tell my graduate students, "When the really rich announce that they want to give something back, be there, with buckets."

"How can I help, sir?"

"The Pope isn't expected to live out the week. I want the next Pope to be an American."

I also tell my graduate students, "Don't expel your beverage through your nostrils when the really rich demand the impossible. There's a fortune's worth of billable hours between 'What an interesting idea' and 'Well, we tried.'"

"Do you follow the cardinals, Mr. Renard?"

I was about to reply that I'd once lost \$500 on the World Series when I realized he was talking about the College of Cardinals, not St. Louis.

"More or less."

"My sources say it's going to be Arooba, the Nigerian. Or that Mexican." He grunted with evident displeasure. "What are you hearing?"

Improvise, Renard, I said to myself. I managed to cough up some ambiguous gargle about how "the Filipino is showing surprising strength." There had to be at least one Filipino cardinal, I figured. Very Catholic country, the Philippines.

"God forbid they should elect a Pope from a country

that's solved the problem of indoor *plumbing*," he said. "It's like the UN." He leaned back with a squeak of expensive leather. "The French want it, you know. So bad they can taste it. They're already in there maneuvering, cutting their deals. Their little cheesy *deals*. Can you imagine a *French Pope*?"

"Mr. Baroom," I said, "I don't even want to think about that. But, sir, these recent, uh, developments ..." I thought "developments" sounded better than "widespread pedophile scandals." "How do you see that, that is, in the context of electing an American Pope? Give me the benefit of your input here." I tell my graduate students that this is a way of saying to the client, *Were you on drugs, or just drunk, when you came up with this idea?*

He glowered at me. "You saying that Saint Peter, the first Pope, was perfect?"

"Well—"

"Didn't he deny knowing Jesus three *times*?"

"You have me there."

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Matthew 16:18."

"Beautifully quoted, sir. But paying hush money to—well, I'm not a theologian."

"These scandals give us an advantage going in."

"I hadn't thought of that."

Just Because He Shuffled Pedophiles Around and Paid Hush Money Doesn't Mean He Wouldn't Make a Fabulous Pope. It wasn't sticking to my bumper.

"It's the last thing anyone would expect. You know the saying: 'He who enters a conclave *papabile* leaves a cardinal.'"

That old chestnut. Of course. I gave a sort of low chuckle by way of pretending that I knew exactly what he was talking about. Later I learned that *papabile* is not a kind of pasta but means "Pope-able." That is, electable. Whatever.

"I want to show you something." Baroom pressed a hidden switch and a panel slid back, revealing a stone staircase going down. I thought, *uh-oh*. I followed him, my hand inside my pocket nervously gripping my cell phone, ready to dial 911 at the first sign of someone wearing a hood.

It turned out to be his relic room. I'd bet you that not many billionaire homes have a relic room. It wasn't included in the *Opulent Domicile* spread. He had accumulated quite the collection: Saint Theresa of Ávila's toenail; a lock of Saint Francis of Assisi's hair; enough bones to make three skeletons, including a femur that once belonged to Saint Jerome of Illyria. Also Saint Tatiana's knuckle.

"She's more venerated in the East," he explained, "but I always had a sweet spot for her." The *pièce de résistance* was Mary Magdalene's tooth. "Third molar," he pointed out. You could barely see the tooth for all the gold and rubies and

**Back in his study I said,
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diamonds it had been mounted on, by some czar of the fifteenth century mainly famous for impaling several thousand recalcitrant peasants on stakes.

I had a *Beam me up, Scotty* moment.

Back in his study and badly in need of a drink, I said thoughtfully, "Mr. Baroom, this isn't going to be easy." I tell my graduate students this is a tactful way of saying *I'm going to want a lot of money*.

He took a fountain pen and scribbled on a piece of paper and slid it across the table. It was an impressive number, with a beautiful string of zeros, like a strand of pearls. It was a number that you could retire on. I found myself thinking, *You know, maybe it is time that we had a Pope*.

"This would be the fee for a successful outcome?" I asked.

He took back the piece of paper and drew a line through a few of the pearls. "Your retainer. Make it happen and I'll add those zeros back."

"There will be expenses, of course."

"Look, Mr. Renard," he said in that annoyed-billionaire way, "that's just not a problem. You get to work. Once the Holy Father passes, there's only a couple weeks before the conclave. There's no time to waste."

On the way down the driveway I looked back and saw white smoke coming out the chimney of his study. That's what they send up the chimney of the Sistine Chapel to announce that they've elected a new Pope.

Back at the office LaMoyné said, "So?"

"You were right about the dungeon."

"I knew he was kinky."

"You have no idea."

Baroom had given me the name of a contact at the AAPC—the American Association of Princes of the Church, one of Washington's more elite trade associations. You have to be a cardinal to belong.

There was a man standing outside the AAPC headquarters with a sign that said HANDS OFF THE ALTAR BOYS!

It's always a challenge when your candidates for Pope are being picketed for sex offenses with minors. Monsignor Murphy had told me over the phone to go in the back way. I was tempted to say something, but didn't. I tell my graduate students, "Don't tease the client about sex scandals until you've established a good working relationship."

Monsignor Murphy was the executive director of the AAPC. He was in his mid-fifties, pudgy, with an Irish accent and intense black eyes. A chain smoker. He didn't look like he'd slept much lately.

"So you've met Bernard," he said, exhaling a lungful of unfiltered cigarette smoke. "Did he show you Saint Tatiana's knuckle?"

"Very impressive."

"He's on to a dealer in Istanbul who claims to have part of Saint Paul's pelvis. He's like a boy in his enthusiasms,

bless his heart. So, we're going to have an American Pope, are we? Well, splendid, splendid."

I got the feeling that Monsignor Murphy wasn't a hundred percent on board.

"I should explain one or two particulars," he said. "First and very foremost, my cardinals aren't to have knowledge of this, em, operation."

"Monsignor, this is going to be enough of a challenge as it is."

"One doesn't *campaign* for the office, Mr. Renard. It's not the New Hampshire primary. The princes must be above politics. Church law is quite specific on the matter. I, on the other hand, am not in the running for the office. If you follow. Can I offer you a drink, Mr. Renard? I'm guessing you're a Scotch rather than a brandy man. I don't normally take a drink at midafternoon, but these are times that try a man's soul."

He fired up another cigarette. "My princes have been through rather a lot lately." Indeed. One of them had been led off in handcuffs just a week before. I'd scratched his name off my *papabile* list. "I can't say that any of us will look back on this time with nostalgia. It would be grand for morale all 'round if you could manage this miracle. All we seem to do now is depositions, with expensive lawyers."

"Can I ask what's the connection between you and Baroom?"

He blew out another lungful. "Well, it's rather an old-fashioned sort of connection, isn't it? I'm his confessor."

"Confessor?"

"Yes. When he makes his confession, which Catholics should, and sometimes actually do, he comes to me. So there you have it."

"Three Hail Marys and two Our Fathers—that sort of thing?"

"Em," he said, looking uncomfortable, "that sort of thing. Now, I've prepared some background for you on the princes." He pointed to a cardboard box that looked heavy.

"Who do we like? Any front-runners?"

"Well, they're all grand in their own way. Whelan of Houston has perhaps the strongest personality. He's the one who stood up to the federal marshals who wanted to arrest the illegal Mexicans in his cathedral basement. It was the one bit of fortunate television we've had in the past year. Tierney of Pittsburgh. Stickler for procedure. Martinez of Miami. Floated over from Havana as a child. I won't say he goes out of his way to discourage the miraculous aspect of it. Durkin of New York. Got into a bit of warm water over the annulments, but what I wouldn't give for that kind of scandal these days. Vaghi of Washington, fluent in nine languages, four of them dead. There's the new one—Kanu of Los Angeles, handsome as a movie star, deft at the outreach to the various communities."

"Is he the one who surfs?"

"The same. Bunbergler of Chicago. Genius at the fundrais-

ing, which isn't easy these days, let me tell you, with all the unpleasantness. Linquist of Minnesota, a pillar, theologically speaking, very close to Rome, though I wouldn't necessarily say Charisma is his middle name. I think what we're hoping for, Mr. Renard, is generally to promote the *idea* of an American pontiff in the world community. If we could just do that much, get people thinking about the princes in a different context, well, that would be accomplishment enough. You'll have earned your place in heaven." He smiled. "At the least your retainer."

He looked at his watch. "I'm afraid I must be off. Archbishop Gurk is being deposed."

The death watch was on at the Vatican. Once the Pope died, the clock would begin ticking. There would be little sleep at Renard Strategic Planning in the days ahead. Normally I would have ordered up some polling data and let the buzz develop organically. But this was no ordinary product launch.

I knew from the get-go that I was probably going to have to "go negative." I generally try to be positive, but sometimes there's just no substitute for cutting the other person off at the knees, harsh as that may sound. The American birds—cardinals, that is—may have all been good, even holy, men in their own way, but a Dream Team they were not, *papabile*-wise. Except maybe for this Dwayne Cardinal Kanu of L.A., the surfer. Pope John Paul II had gotten some very good ink in his day for being a skier. I think people are reassured to know that their Pope favors an athletic lifestyle, that he's not going to just sit on a throne all day talking Latin and handing down papal decrees about keeping women out of the priesthood.

I saw from Monsignor Murphy's—I must say CIA-quality—dossiers on the leading foreign cardinals that the front-runner was this Kojo Cardinal Arooba of Nigeria, an extremely impressive fellow, I'll be the first to admit, the Colin Powell of the College of Cardinals. He'd been converted from some African religion called animism to Catholicism by Irish missionaries. Meanwhile, Felix Cardinal Verguenza of Honduras, the other front-runner, had denounced the United States for training Latin American dictators at the School of the Americas. I'm not saying he was wrong. I'd probably feel the same way if I were a Honduran cardinal whose family had been wiped out by a military junta. He was also continually demanding that U.S. Banana do something about the snakes and spiders that were constantly biting its workers. Apparently, poisonous snakes and spiders love bananas. Again, this is the part of the job I enjoy, the learning about different cultures. At any rate, this gave me something to work with.

It was my mentor, Nick Naylor, who pioneered the field of product placement among opinion makers. Until then product placement had been confined to paying film and TV producers to "place" your "product" in their movies and

shows. It hadn't occurred to anyone to pay talking heads (I won't name any names) who go on TV. These folks don't make huge salaries from their newspaper columns and what have you. They're usually happy to slip in a reference to your client's continuing efforts to reduce harmful pollutants, or the nifty new jet fighter that a couple of Luddite congressmen are holding up in Appropriations. They're more than happy to receive in return a small token of appreciation—in the form of, say, a new German sports car or a Rolex watch or a two-week cruise—along with a note saying "Great appearance on Larry King!" Is this quote unquote ethical? I say, Let him who is without spin cast the first stone.

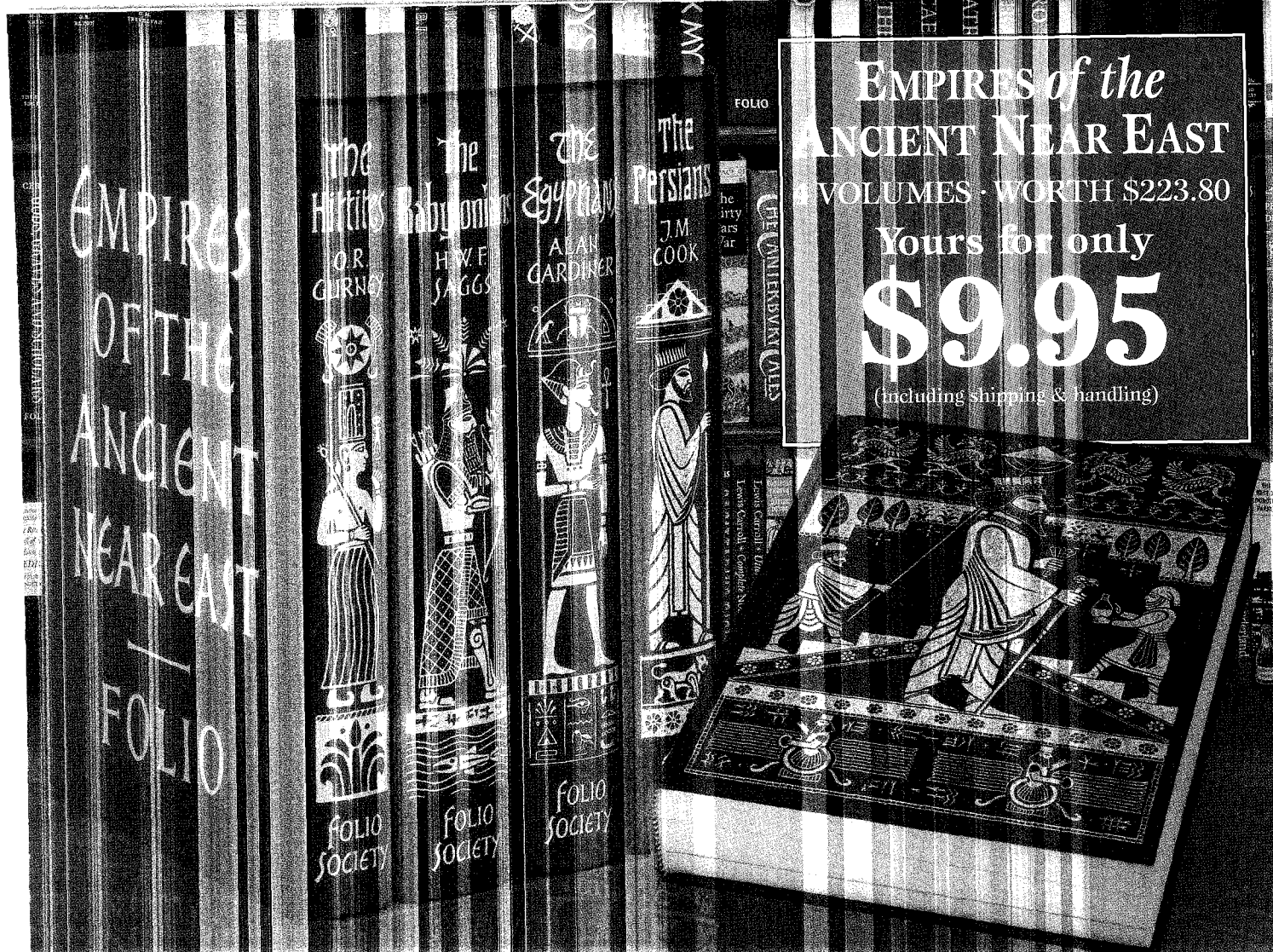
But I didn't want this to be just a top-down campaign. Ultimately, in any campaign you've got to have the "little people" on your side. Since LaMoyne was working full-tilt on oppo (that is, opposition research), I put Lorraine on this. Lorraine had been one of my more promising grad students. She'd done her master's thesis on the California prune industry's campaign to reposition its product as "dried plums." Lorraine took it to the next level, proposing that rotten fruit could successfully be packaged and sold as a "pre-softened" high-fiber food for seniors. I was just blown away. I hired her immediately as a junior associate. I sent her paper to Nick, in California. He wrote back, "A natural. She'll go FAR!!!"

I said to Lorraine, "It takes a miracle to produce a miracle." I didn't have to explain further. It's a pleasure to work with someone who "gets it" right away. Also, she was Catholic. And she could provide me with a "woman's perspective" on the whole business of a 2,000-year-old self-perpetuating male hierarchy. Lorraine was only in her mid-twenties, but she still dressed like a Catholic schoolgirl, and quite fetchingly, I must say, in the blazer, pleated skirt, dark stockings, and black pumps. That said, I make it a rule not to get romantically involved with junior associates. For one thing, it makes it very difficult to fire them.

It wouldn't have been seemly to roll out the campaign while the present Holy Father was on his deathbed. But we were able to hit the ground running the moment he started to cool. I don't mean that disrespectfully. He was huge, absolutely a giant. It would have been a piece of cake getting him elected.

At any rate, the morning after he finally expired (and, I'm certain, breezed through the pearly gates like a motorist with an E-Z Pass), the first public-service announcements appeared, sponsored by the Upon This American Rock Foundation: "Two Thousand Years. Isn't It Time *We* Had a Pope?"

"Upon This Rock" is, of course, a reference to what Jesus said to Peter, who was the first Pope, when he said that he was going to make Peter the foundation of the Church. Lorraine informed me that it has a double meaning, because the Latin word for rock is *petra*. Up to then I



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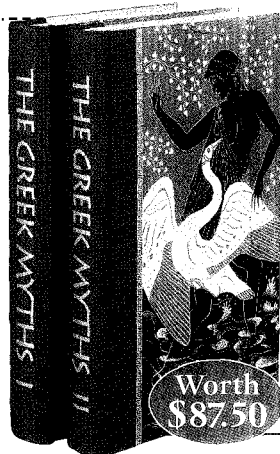
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thought it was the name of an expensive French wine. It's full of amazing stuff like this, the Bible. You can see why people study it. At any rate, the first call came while I was still in the shower, which I didn't take as a good sign, since my name didn't appear anywhere in the ad. (The address listed at the bottom was a Catholic-sounding P.O. box in Chicago.) Sure enough, it was my old nemesis, Lloyd Grove, of *The Washington Post*.

"So, Rick Renard is behind this?"

"If you're asking am I 'behind' the idea of the United States having at least some input into the administration of a major world religion, the answer is 'Hell, yes.'"

Perhaps this was not an ideal choice of words, but I hadn't slept in three days and I was dripping wet. The more pressing question was, Who leaked it to Grove? I had hoped to low-key my involvement with Upon This American Rock.

I reached Murf on his cell. I heard chanting. He was in the middle of saying mass with some archbishops. He said he'd have to call me back. I said, "Don't call me back, just plug the leak in your shop, because this certainly didn't come from my shop." You can't spell "discreet" without the *D* in Renard. I was cheesed. You'd think that an organization that has been around for 2,000 years would be a little more disciplined. But we were off and running.

That night three of my, shall we say, cash-encouraged talking heads were on separate TV shows, yakking it up about how it was high time there was an American pontiff. One of them, a former White House speechwriter, even suggested that the French might try to "steal" the election. Another suggested that the Chinese were "up to their usual mischief." Brilliant, and entirely their own spin. It's a pleasure to work with real pros. I included flowers along with their cash envelopes. Phase One was complete.

The next day Upon This American Rock, of which I was now officially the "executive director" (what the hell), released the results of a poll showing overwhelming support for the idea among American Catholics. To be sure, the sampling error, at 48 percent, was a little higher than the normal plus or minus four percent, but the important thing was to get the poll "out there." The media love polls and will report anything you give them. By the time they get around to noticing that your "respondents" consisted of two cabdrivers and a bartender, your poll has already made headlines. Phase Two complete.

Lorraine called from Los Angeles to report that she had an elderly woman who, in return for an all-expenses-paid cruise to Alaska, was prepared to call the *L.A. Times* and say that she had been miraculously cured of a very nasty case of psoriasis by Dwayne Cardinal Kanu.

"Psoriasis?" I said. "Can't we do better than a skin condition? Cancer, leukemia, a heart condition, anything would be more dramatic than itching."

"I can ask." She sounded a bit dubious. This was really

her first time out "in the field." I've seen this happen before. They're great on paper, but when it comes time to get down there in the trenches, they get all squirrely.

"Hey—is this the same Lorraine who came up with the idea of selling rotten fruit to seniors, at a significant markup?"

"I'll try."

"How often do you get a chance to help elect the next Pope? We're making history here."

She called back to report that Mrs. Garcia, who would now be going on a round-the-world cruise, had been miraculously cured not of psoriasis but of something called alopecia.

"Sounds awful," I said.

"It is."

"Now you're cooking," I told her. I was genuinely proud. I thought back to my first assignment for Nick Naylor: calling up reporters to tell them that our client's rival burger-chain operation was using kangaroo meat. One headline said, "WHOPPER OR HOPPER? BURGER BOY DENIES KANGAROO MEAT ALLEGATION." I got misty-eyed thinking of it. At any rate, Phase Three complete. On to Rome!

LaMoyné went into the mother of all funks when I told him he would have to stay in dull old D.C. and run things from the office.

"It's the Eternal City," I said. "It's not going anywhere."

"Like me."

Sometimes I think half the job is keeping the people who work for you inspired. It's not easy being Pope.

I took to Rome like a Visigoth. For someone in my profession it's inspiring to be in a city that has been doing the Big Spin for thousands of years. Here, I felt, I could be myself. Walking around those historical stones felt weirdly familiar, as though I'd been there in earlier times, advising Roman road builders on how to package their bids for the Appian Way, or even the Emperor on how to get maximum credit for providing bread and circuses to the low-income.

Walking into Saint Peter's Basilica for the first time, I was in awe. I imagined advising various Popes on how to handle Luther and Henry VIII and Galileo. In the first instance, I would have told Pope Leo X to not-so-quietly get the word out about the fact that Luther had had several nervous breakdowns. And what kind of monk goes around nailing pieces of paper to the doors of cathedrals? Some vow of obedience *he* took.

With Henry, I would have said to Popes Clement VII and Paul III, Look, this isn't about religion; this isn't about the quote unquote Real Presence of Christ in the communion; this is about control. Everyone's acting like an alpha gorilla. Get him down here for a weekend at Castel Whatever, fill him up on your best wine, tell him he's

the best King Henry that England has ever had, including Henry V. Then have Cardinal Sinatra find a loophole in the annulment law and *give him his divorce*. Look at the big picture. We're losing Germany because of that nutball monk, now you want to lose England, all that monastic land? Over this? Would you want to sleep with Catherine of Aragon? *No, gracias!*

With Galileo, I would have said to Pope Urban VIII, Before you start with the hot pokers, stop and ask yourself: do you really want to torture an old man—who, by the way, seems to be on to something here—just for looking through a telescope and saying *Whoa, we're revolving!* Burning heretics at the stake is satisfying in the short run, and wonderful entertainment for the people, but how's it going to look in a couple of centuries, when they start sending up the Hubble telescope? I would have told him, Progress happens. Make it work *for* you. Embrace it. Go up there on the balcony and announce, Yo, everyone, Galileo is working for *us!* We love this man! We're going to put an observatory right here in Saint Peter's!

Standing there on the spot where they crucified poor old Saint Peter, I thought, The man ends up here in rags and chains, upside down on a cross, to make up for those three denials, and 2,000 years later he's got *this* for a tomb and one billion followers. Whatever faith you believe in, you have to hand it to Peter and Paul. Talk about spinergy. At any rate, these were my thoughts as I wandered around the basilica. I couldn't remember when I had felt so pumped about a client.

I set up my war room in a little *pensione*—Italian for “cheap hotel”—off the Spanish Steps, not far from the cheap hotel where the English poet Keats died, of TB, in 1821. Very historical, Rome. Everywhere you turn, someone famous died there or was horribly executed. On Bernard's budget I could have rented the top floor of the Hilton, but my presence here was strictly unofficial. Murf set me up with a man we'll call Angelo, who was hot-wired into the Vatican press corps. I suspected from the diamond rings and the \$1,800 suit and \$800 shoes that Angelo was on about five different payrolls, but at least you know you're not going to waste time hand-wringing over ethics. I laid an eyeball-widening brick of Bernard's crisp \$100 bills on the table and told him what I needed, and his attitude was *Pronto, Signor Renardo!* My kind of people, Italians.

The next day *L'Osservatore Romano*, which is to the Vatican what the *Daily Racing Form* is to horse racing, ran a page-one, above-the-fold piece saying don't count the Americans out. The jump included a nice mention of Cardinal Kanu and Lorraine's alopecia woman.

The cardinals, some of whom apparently themselves suffered from alopecia—what luck!—were now starting to arrive. They were technically forbidden—by papal decree, no less—access to any kind of media: television, radios, newspapers, and such. The previous Pope, God rest him, had spelled out the rules for electing his successor in a document called *Universi Dominici Gregis*. I read it—twenty-four single-spaced pages of regs, with footnotes. Violate any one of them and it was into the eternal darkness with you.

The cardinals would be housed in a new \$20 million Vatican guesthouse—the Domus Sanctae Marthae, built for them by a rich American from Pittsburgh. The birds weren't allowed to speak to anyone outside, and no one was allowed to talk to them. No phones, cell phones, or fax machines. They weren't even allowed to engage in politicking among themselves. This must have made for very dull conversation around the Domus water cooler. You'd think there would be some pretty furious horse trading going on—*Vote for me, I'll put you in charge of all L.A. annulments*, that sort of thing. But technically this is called simony. I had to look it up: “buying or selling ecclesiastical preferment.” And anyone who engages in it gets excommunicated. Good thing I'm not Catholic.

No chance, either, of sneaking in and distributing campaign literature. This was a terrible shame, inasmuch as there had been some terrific stuff lately on Dwayne Cardinal Kanu. One of the tabloid papers had nicknamed him “The

**The American cardinals may have
all been good men, but a Dream
Team they were not. Except
maybe for this Dwayne Cardinal
Kanu of L.A., the surfer.**

Big Kanuna,” and the History Channel had devoted an entire hour to the history of Popes and outdoor sports, including some incredible footage of then Monsignor Kanu executing a truly divine “cheater five” on his longboard at Oceanside Pier.

The guesthouse and the Sistine Chapel, where the voting takes place, would be swept regularly for listening devices. The whole place would be sealed off by the Swiss Guard—and the Swiss, whatever else they may be, are old hands when it comes to borders.

I asked Lorraine how she was coming with the Nostradamus predictions—Nostradamus being the sixteenth-century French (figures) astrologer who wrote that book that appeals to a certain element of the public. She was here with me in Rome—a source of some resentment on the part of LaMoyne. She looked tired. Well, we were all tired. She said she couldn't find anything in Nostradamus.

“Lorraine.”

“Rick. There's just nothing in here about a surfing American cardinal who cures alopecia getting elected Pope in the early part of the twenty-first century. I'm *sorry*.”

It wasn't that I expected *The New York Times* to pick

up a Nostradamus “prediction,” but this sort of thing helps with the supermarket-tabloid-reading set, and you need them.

“Fudge,” I said.

“Fudge?”

“Fudge. Do I have to do everything?”

She finally cobbled together some mumbo jumbo about “a man of the West” who would “walk on water” to the “East.” “Perfect,” I said. “Start faxing.” She looked like she was about to cry. I took her out to Tullio, off the Piazza Barberini, for a nice dinner. It seemed to cheer her up. Afterward we walked over to the Palazzo Barberini, this being the palace of an Italian family that produced a pope and a number of prelates. Their symbol was a bee, the emphasis being on the stinger more than the honey. If you look at the base of the twisty bronze columns around the main altar in Saint Peter’s, you’ll see the bee symbol. The Barberinis melted down the bronze from plates they took from the Pantheon. They were the Sopranos of the papacy, you might say. But then, a lot of building in Rome consisted of plundering from other sites, just like the construction business in New Jersey. I said to Lorraine, “Someday there will be little American motifs in Saint Peter’s if we do our job right.” She seemed pleased by the idea.

I called Bernard to give him a progress report and got

the English private secretary on the phone. “Mr. Baroom is with the *lawyers*. He *cahn’t* come to the *phone*.” I said, “Well, tell Mr. Baroom it’s going very *swimmingly*, you can positively *feel* the groundswell!”

That night I had this vision. It might have been from the high levels of potassium in the artichokes at Tullio. In Italy you can eat the entire artichoke, and they were so good I ate five. At any rate, I immediately called Murf, in Washington, who was getting ready to come over with his prince delegation, and said to him, “Is there any way your birds can arrive by boat? Peter was a fisherman, and I think it would be appropriate, and a fabulous visual, to have them come up the Tiber River—I’ll check on the depth—by boat. A torchlight procession up the steps from the river at Castel San Angelo, with a choir singing ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic.’ We’ll get Placido Domingo—better yet, Stevie Wonder.” *Mine eyes have seen the glory!* Sometimes I think I’m really a frustrated impresario.

“Em,” Monsignor Murf said, “it’s a lovely idea, Rick. But I’m not sure my princes will go for it.”

“Every time I turn on the TV, I see another dreary cardinal at Fiumicino”—the Rome airport—“rolling his own suitcase or schlepping his garment bag. They look like flight attendants. If these guys are princes, they need to start acting like princes. Let’s get some *majesty* going here. In the old days, they arrived in jeweled carriages to the sound of trumpets.”

“I’ll get back to you.” You hear this all the time in Washington. Basically, it means no. He did, however, say that he might have something useful for me when he got to Rome.

The Media Center was in a building that was once used to torture people who didn’t believe in the Holy Trinity. I’d installed Lorraine there, along with a half dozen worker bees (we called them our Barberinis), as a credentialed correspondent for *Working Pontiff* magazine. Her real job was to monitor the media. Cardinal Arooba had arrived in Rome that morning. She showed me the video of it. Half of Rome had turned out to meet him, people grabbing to kiss his hand. Catholics just can’t seem to get enough of hand-smooching the higher-ups. Cardinals must walk around with permanently damp hands. I don’t mean it as a criticism. At any rate, I’ll be the first to admit that Arooba was radioactively charismatic. A regular Catholic Bishop Tutu. Shoo-in of the Fisherman. You could just see him in that white soutane on the balcony, bestowing his first papal blessing on a million swooning Catholics. Ladbrokes, the London oddsmakers, had him at even money. Verguenza was at 6:1. Dwayne Cardinal Kanu they had at 112:1. There being 112 cardinals, this was not what you would call encouraging.

Time to go negative. Let me state for the record: I don’t like to go negative, but as my mentor, Nick, used to say, “At least you can say you considered *not* going negative.”

I laid another brick of Franklins in front of Angelo.

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR AFTER X-RAY

The radiologist forgot to place the shield
across the child’s ovaries.

The risks are minimal they say, one
in a million, one in ten thousand.

The lead-rubber hand, somehow protective,
positioned over could-be freckles, fingers.

The child didn’t notice until after the picture
was taken. Furious, cheated, she refused

to get dressed, stalked into the radiology
waiting room bare-assed and brazen

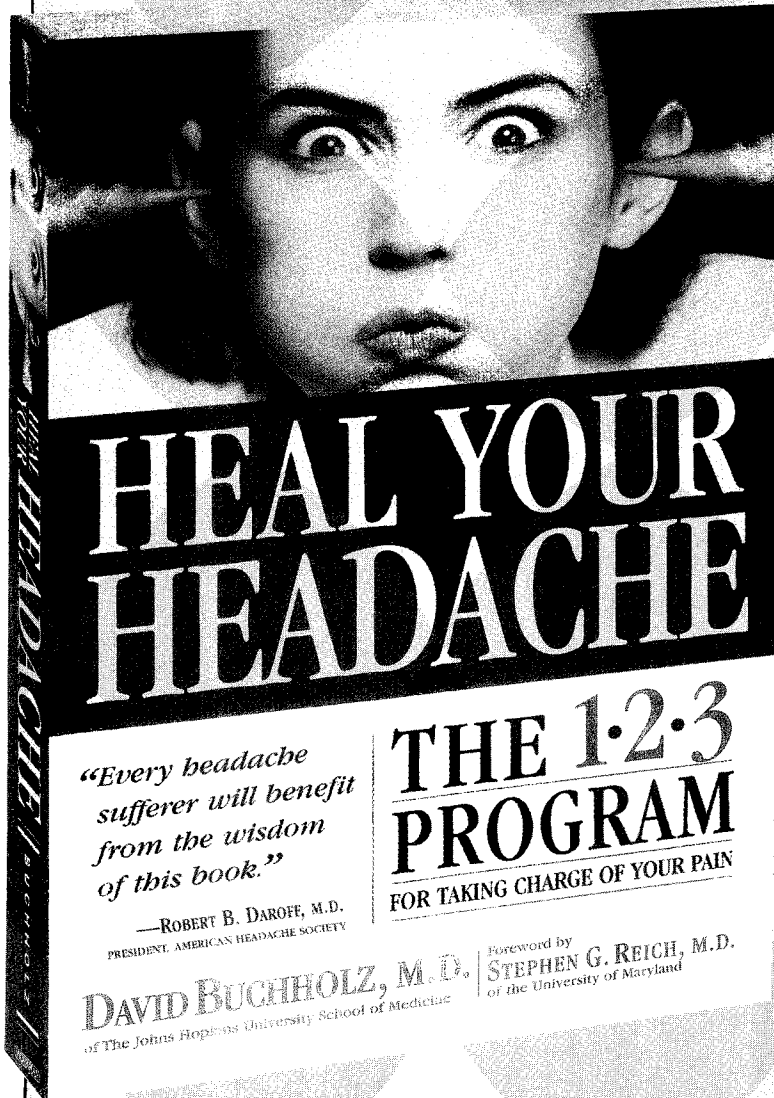
until her mother tackled her and begged
her to stop screaming.

—JILLIAN WEISE

Jillian Weise is the Fred Chappell Fellow at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She recently won the Academy of American Poets John McKay Shaw Award.

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The next day my favorite Vatican rag ran a page-one story on animism, from which the Irish missionaries in Africa had converted Cardinal Arooba, along with a killer quote—from someone identified as one of the world’s “ultimate authorities” on animism—about how animists believe that the spirits of dead animals live on and can even be dangerous. The quote continued, “Not that Cardinal Arooba still adheres to these stern beliefs, so far as we are aware.” Bull’s-eye, Angelo.

“Get this out to every reporter and producer here,” I said to Lorraine.

I’d flown over a couple of tame talking heads with passable credentials as Vaticanisti—that is, Vatican-watchers. You pick up a lot of local lingo in this job. The next morning they were on the U.S. talk shows saying that Cardinal Arooba was a wonderful man who would “probably not” suddenly start sacrificing goats on the altar and casting spells. Of course, they were careful to add, there was no hard data available on the recidivism rate among former animists. There’s nothing more satisfying than building a good, solid media campaign. It’s meat and potatoes, basically. You just get the information out there so that people can make an informed choice. At any rate, things were going well.

That afternoon I was in my room at the Pensione Tiberulosi, on the phone to the head of the Knights of Columbus back in the States, who was about to take off for Rome on a char-

tered 747 with 400 of his top Knights. There was a knock on my door. Two suits with U.S. State Department ID.

“Richard Renard? The ambassador would like to see you.”

I said, “Well, I’m a little busy right now.”

“Now, please. *Sir*.”

I wasn’t sure what the jurisdiction issue was, but never let it be said that Rick Renard isn’t patriotic. The suits were not what you would call conversational, which gave the trip up the Via Peoria to the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See the aroma of a forced march.

The American ambassador didn’t look pleased to see me. Her aide went into instant buttock when he saw me, and then he disappeared, as though being in the same room with me might retard his chances of becoming deputy chief of mission to Ulan Bator.

“Mis-ter Renard,” she said, making “Mister” sound like a fifty-fifty proposition. “And what brings *you* to Rome?”

“I’m on a pilgrimage,” I said. “Yourself?”

Rick Renard does not normally insult U.S. ambassadors on first meeting, but I was a little *formaggioid* at being hauled onto her carpet in this brusque manner. Her Excellency’s qualification for the job, aside from being a

fabulously wealthy Catholic widow, the sister of a powerful U.S. senator, and a major contributor to the current President’s election campaign, was—well, I’ll have to get back to you on that. I don’t mean to imply that being U.S. ambassador to the smallest nation in the world (0.2 square miles—Central Park is bigger) is anything to sneeze at, but let’s just say we didn’t send Henry Kissinger there. Maybe we will when the Vatican gets the bomb. At any rate, I was in no mood to kowtow to Madam Ambassador.

“I’m here to look after our country’s interests,” she said, ice forming on her tongue. “Which includes preventing U.S. mercenaries from disrupting papal elections.”

Who had sold me out? Murf ran a tight shop. Angelo. Had to be Angelo.

“I’m only helping to make it a level playing field,” I said.

“Are you Catholic, Mr. Renard?”

“Not technically, though I’m very impressed with what I’ve seen so far. It’s definitely an option, spiritual-wise.”

“If you were, you’d be excommunicated. Placing your soul in mortal danger might not worry you, Mr. Renard, but any Catholic involved in this—this *sinister* operation of yours—is also automatically excommunicated. Am I getting through to you?”

“Excuse me, but what’s so quote unquote sinister about an American Pope? I thought you were looking out for our interests here.”

“Do you have any idea,” she said, “how catastrophic this could be? Trying to influence the election of

That night three of my, shall we say, cash-encouraged talking heads were on separate TV shows, yakking it up about an American pontiff.

the Roman *Pope*?”

“Unlike influencing the election of the U.S. President?”

“Mr. Renard, the Pope is above politics! He is a *holy* figure!”

“Well, our President is no saint, I’ll grant you.”

The interview didn’t go uphill from there. She threatened to have me deported.

“Where?” I said. “To the other side of the Tiber? I’ll walk and save you the trouble.”

Unfortunately, she took me up on my offer. And just try to find a cab in Rome during a papal conclave. I had to walk back to my *pensione*. I was as steamed as Tullio *carciofi* when I got back to the Tiberulosi.

I said to Lorraine, “Turns out Angelo is no angel. He’s working for the bad guys.”

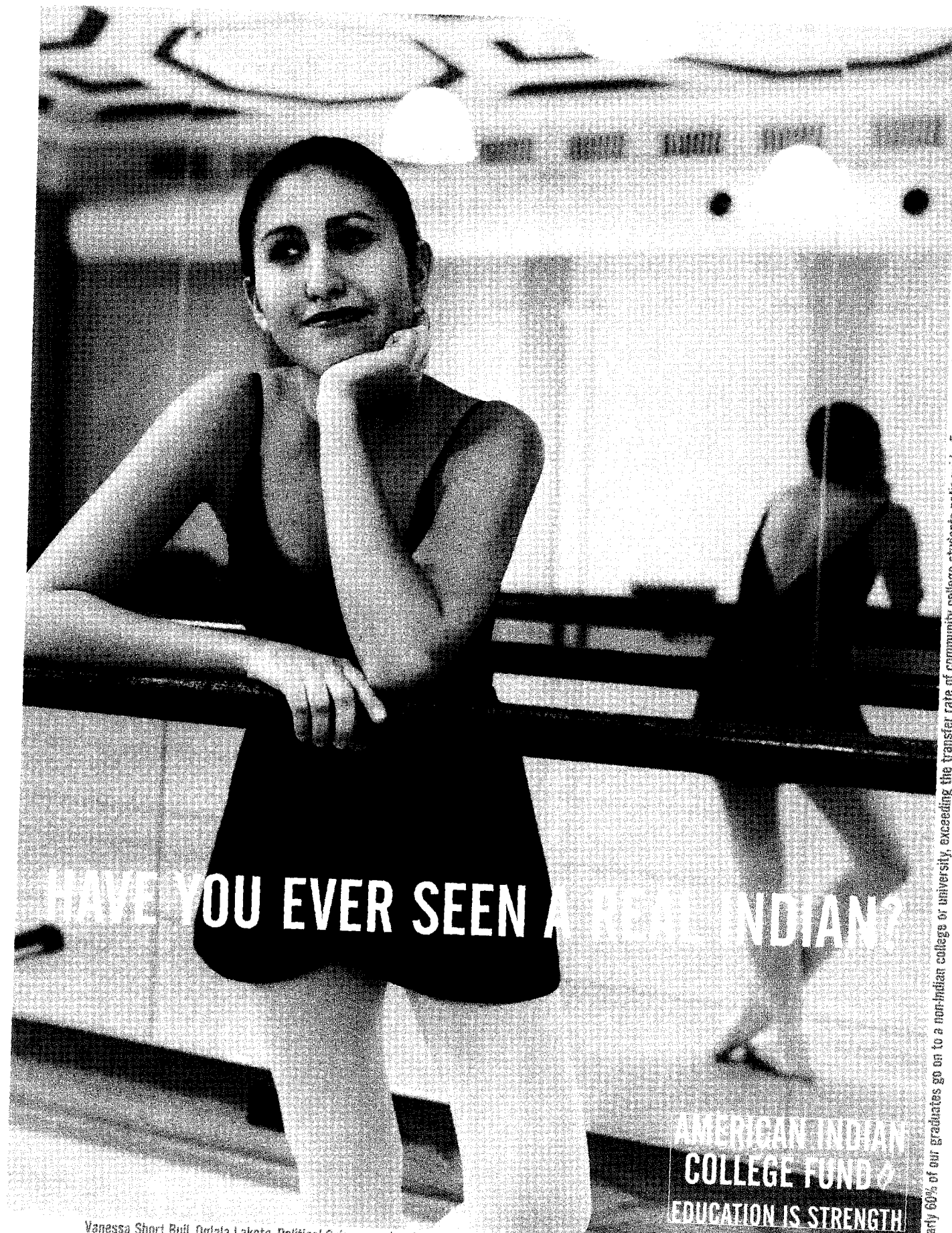
“Who are the bad guys? I’m confused.”

“Us. As usual. Typical bureaucratic small-mindedness. You’d think she’d have offered to help.”

“So are we closing up shop?”

“Of course not. Reinforcements are on the way.”

At this exact moment the phone rang. It was Bernard. “A quarter million dollars to charter a 747?” He didn’t sound



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at all pleased. This happens. The client tells you money is no object, and suddenly he's going over every bill with an electron microscope.

"Mr. Baroom," I explained, "the Knights of Columbus are our foot soldiers in this campaign." It took ten minutes of strenuous client mollification to calm him down.

"I thought he was rich," Lorraine said when I hung up. "He wasn't sounding very rich."

"He'll feel better when he sees the TV coverage of the Knights pouring into Saint Peter's. Where do we stand with the crucifixes?"

"They should get here tomorrow, by FedEx." We'd ordered thousands of crosses made from miniature longboards. They'd be distributed to followers of Cardinal Kanu to wear. If you're going to start a cult, you need gear. These would definitely get all the brahs amped, as they say in surfing circles.

Everything was coming together nicely, but I was concerned that the U.S. embassy might expose our operation. I conceived a plan. As the toast goes, "Confusion to the enemy."

On the drive out to Fiumicino to greet the Knights, I said to Lorraine, "Listen closely." This is another part of the job I enjoy—the mentoring process. It's satisfying to help bring young people along.

I dialed Angelo. "Angelo," I said in my best conspiratorial voice, "I've just heard from my people. There's a change of plan. They've cut a deal. The operation is off. I repeat, off. Cancelled. We're throwing our support to Verguenza, from Honduras."

"*Bene*," Angelo said. One thing about the Italians: they don't question violent changes of allegiance. For them it's normal.

"In return for our support," I continued, "Verguenza will cease putting pressure on U.S. Banana and that military college where we train the Latino dictators. Anyway, our operation to elect an American *Papa* is off. *Finito, cancellato*. We're most appreciative of your efforts. I'll be sending you a nice token of our appreciation."

"*Bene*."

"Is that true?" Lorraine asked as I hung up.

"Not a word of it. I just wish I could be there when he tells Madam Plenipotentiary that our cardinals are throwing their support behind the most anti-American prelate in the Western Hemisphere." I permitted myself a low chuckle. "Oh, the phones are going to be ringing *tonight*."

That evening 400 Knights of Columbus processed into the Piazza San Pietro carrying red, white, and blue Glo-stick "torches" and signs proclaiming VIVA IL PAPAMERICA! I thought the Italian would give it a more local flavor.

Standing there watching, I got choked up to think that after 2,000 years we might finally have an American pontiff. I understand that, technically speaking, America has existed for only one tenth of that period of time. I'm more talking about the idea. At any rate, the TV coverage, as you probably

saw for yourself, was spectacular. CNN slugged it "The Night of the Knights." The impact back home was tremendous. For years American Catholics had been waking up every morning to stories about sex scandals. Now they saw this triumphant procession into the front yard of their faith. Rick Renard is not one to bang his own drum, but at times like this I am tempted to say, "Not bad for an old hack." This was no time for complacency, however. The conclave would start the next day.

Murf's princes had been sealed off in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the papal guesthouse.

"I've got something for you," Murf called to say. "But I can't discuss it over the telephone."

We met at a trattoria in Trastevere. I hadn't seen Murf since D.C. He looked exhausted—but then, monsignors in charge of cardinals don't get much sleep before a papal conclave. His eyes were dartier than ever.

"One of my princes, he's the chaplain to the U.S. Armed Forces, intimately well connected in Washington. He received a call from a certain person of importance there asking him was it true that the American princes were supporting Cardinal Verguenza. You wouldn't know anything about this?"

I told him about planting the disinformation with his man Angelo in order to throw the embassy off my trail and get it to work on taking out Verguenza.

"Jaysus, Rick. You should check with me first before doing such a thing. It's awkward for my prince. He had to deny the whole thing. Anyway, Angelo's no spy. I know the man well. I've heard his confession. He may not be a saint, but he's loyal, I can vouch."

"Well, someone sold me out to the embassy. It had to be Angelo. The ambassador sent goons for me and threatened to deport me."

"Bit of a dragon, isn't she? The princes refer to her in private as 'The Holy Mother.' But she's a dragon without teeth. I wouldn't worry about her. But don't be spreading any more of this. I won't have my princes needing to deny they're part of a cabal to elect a communist Pope."

"Whatever—but I won't be using Angelo again."

"Now, then, let's get to it," he said in a low voice, with sideways glances. "As you know, the princes aren't permitted to see or hear any media whatsoever. No one's even permitted to talk to them. *But* there's a chat room, *and* I find myself in possession of the password. Don't ask how I got it. It's the most secret secret in Christendom right now." He fired up a cigarette off the one he was already smoking. "How are you under the duress, Rick?"

I told him that being a strategic communicator in Washington, D.C., could be extremely stressful.

"No, no," he said, "*duress*. You know, *peine forte et dure*. The torture."

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"Well," he said, "it's not going to come to that, is it? The days of the Borgia Popes are over, eh? The things they did. Dreadful, dreadful. But just to err on the side of safety, I think you might want to relocate from your hotel." He scribbled an address on a piece of paper and took a key out of his pocket. "You'll be safe there. It's a small apartment on the Campo de' Fiori. The princes sometimes use it for private occasions. There's just this one key. Funny, isn't it?"

"What?"

"*Conclave*. The word means 'with key' in Latin. And here's your key."

"Maybe you should keep the password to yourself."

"No, no," he said. "If something should happen to me, you should have it, to carry the thing to consummation."

He got up to go. "It's a grand thing we're doing, Rick.

I may not get to heaven, but you know, I feel certain that Saint Peter is on our side." He winked at me. "I'm off. Don't forget to say your prayers."

The apartment on the Campo de' Fiori had a king-size bed and a huge Jacuzzi and lots of candles in the bathroom. I guess they used it to relax. More important, it had a high-speed line for Internet access—the papal decree against media had not mentioned such technology. *Quod blah blah non prohiberi*—"What is not forbidden is permitted." The cardinals' chat room may have been the most significant ecclesiastical loophole since they came up with the concept of invincible ignorance so that innocent heathen could get into heaven. (If I have this right. As I say, I'm no theologian.) At any rate, armed with

Murf's password I was able to navigate past the Vatican Web site's firewall and soon found myself inside the most secret cyber-chamber in Christendom. I felt like that archaeologist looking into King Tut's tomb for the first time. There was an area where you could look up cardinals' statements about various issues. With the help of a Latin dictionary I was able to do a little creative editing there. I slightly changed the wording of a speech that Cardinal Arooba had given to some synod of bishops, inserting "not" or "un-" here and there, putting him in more or less direct disagreement with various Church policies such as those regarding birth control, the ordination of women, papal infallibility, and the Immaculate Conception. Was this, strictly speaking, "unethical"? I'm not really comfortable making those sorts of judgments. One man's ethical lapse is another's client servicing. Who can say at the end of the day? I also fiddled a little with Cardinal Verguenza's sermon about U.S. Banana, adding the words "criminal" and "imperialist." In Cardinal Kanu's bio I inserted a pop-up, so that if you clicked onto his name, you got a flashing message saying I AM NOT WORTHY. It's from the story of Jesus healing the centurion's sick servant. I figured modesty would go down well in a papal conclave.

I watched TV with one eye while I was doing this, so I got to see the clash in the Piazza San Pietro that night between the Knights of Columbus and the Chevaliers de L'Ordre de Saint Denis. I

BLIND DATE

After *Where were you born?* and *How long were you married?*

Comes the first sip of wine, and after that the clash of cutlery

And the shuffling shoes of the waiter, then the silence so brief

You almost don't hear it. *What are the smallest objects you have lost?*

What sudden smells make you stop and think back?

And the struggle, the summoning up, the visualizing, the squinting into the past.

Now and then she interrupts and asks

For a story, a theory, speculations, interpretations.

How many close friends have died and where do you think they went

And how do you talk to them now that they're gone?

And your mind is eagerly opening, swelling, a cavern in which

What have been formerly hidden from you by the public din

Now dart around like bats with their insistent, intimate squeakings.

Did your mother like you? How do you start a conversation with a stranger?

By now, the answers come easier, more flowing, a zone, a spigot, a well.

What parts of yourself have you given up since leaving your home town?

Have you ever been lost? Broke? Hungry? Have you ever asked your sister

What she thought of you back then, when you were kids?

The conversation a call and response, and when she enters the taxi,

And waves bye-bye, you are left standing at the altar

In the Church of Lost Memories wearing that ridiculous tie,

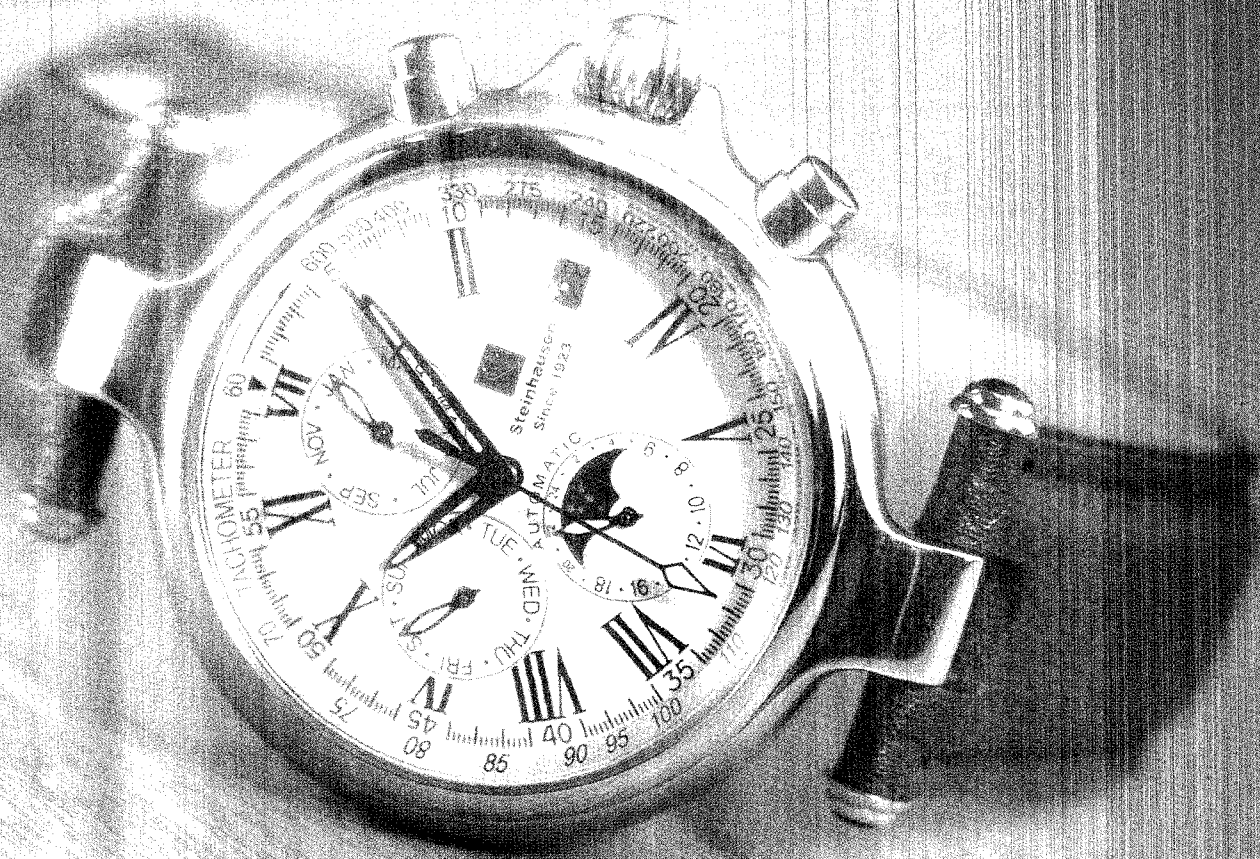
Your hands in your pockets, jingling the change, sniffing the ancient air

For clues, for distillations, perfume fresh from the flowers.

Have you ever? Have you ever?

—STEVE ORLEN

Steve Orlen teaches in the MFA programs at the University of Arizona and Warren Wilson College. His most recent book of poems is This Particular Eternity (2001).



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kicked myself for not anticipating that the French—who had been wanting one of their own on the papal throne ever since they lost Benedict XIV (a.k.a. Bernard Garnier, the “counter anti-pope”), back in 1433—might try something like this. The record will show that my Knights did not throw the first punches. The footage is clear on that score. But things certainly did escalate, overwhelming the local *carabinieri* and requiring the involvement of the Italian military.

Murf called me, sounding fairly frantic. “I’m looking out at tanks. *Tanks*, Rick. Tell me we didn’t start this.”

“Absolutely not. In fact, I think it’s an excellent argument for an American pontiff. A firm hand on the tiller of Saint Peter’s.” Good line. I made a note to pass that along to the TV producers.

It was a long night, but finally dawn broke over the Eternal City. On TV they were saying that the cardinals were in their dorm, getting ready for the first day of conclave. I hoped they were also doing a little cyber-chatting.

I was on my cell to an ABC News producer, securing some B-roll of Cardinal Kanu riding the half-pipe at Pismo Beach, when LaMoyne reached me on my other cell.

“You heard?” he said.

“Heard what?”

“Bernard. He’s been charged by the SEC.”

“What for?”

“Let me count the counts. Securities fraud, stock manipulation, wire fraud, insider trading. They’ve frozen his assets. Never a good sign, that.”

“Jesus,” I said, that being about all I could think to say.

“Mary and Joseph,” LaMoyne added. “I’ll see what I can find out. Meanwhile, do I assume we are no longer on the papal-election account?”

“Call Lorraine,” I said. “I’m in the middle of something.”

“I was coming to that. She called here. She left a message. Why don’t I play it for you?”

There was a knock on the door. To paraphrase Dorothy Parker, what fresh hell was this? Some safe house. It sounded like Mussolini was outside with the entire blackshirt brigade.

The apartment door had a peephole. I didn’t like what I saw on the other side. Suits. Suits worn by large men, blond, with crew cuts. They didn’t look Italian.

“Here you go,” LaMoyne said. I listened to Lorraine’s voice on the office voice mail. “Rick, I’m sorry, but I just can’t do this. I’m a Catholic. I’m risking my immortal *soul*. I have to resign. Sorry. And it wasn’t Angelo, it was me. I had to. We’re talking about my *soul*. I’ll send you a postcard from whatever convent I end up in.”

LaMoyne came back on. “Are we having a good day?”

“There are men outside my door.”

“Better do as the Romans do. Flee.”

The suits were now banging on the door. I called Murf on his cell. A voice, not his, answered. I asked for Murf, and it

said in this excommunicating, unfriendly way, “Who is this?”

“Uh, Rick.”

“Monsignor has nothing further to say to you, *Mister Renard*.”

I heard the door break open, and soon found myself being trundled, I think the word is, into the back of a black sedan. The suits were not particularly communicative, but I could see from the approaching dome of Saint Peter’s that we were heading back across the river to Vatican City. We went down some winding streets into a courtyard with a heavy metal door above which I caught a brief glimpse of a shield and the words *GUARDIA SVIZZERA*, this being Italian for “Swiss Guard.” I took this to be both good news and not-good news.

My interview, if you could call it that, with the head of their Intelligence Division (I think he was, though he never formally introduced himself) could not be described as sociable. He was pretty Swiss about it.

As I look back, it was probably a good thing that the vote came in when it did, or Rick Renard might still be languishing in a dank dungeon underneath the Vatican. In the old days, apparently, the way they dealt with simoniacs was to sew them up in a sack with wild animals and chuck them into the Tiber River. At any rate, I’ve never been so relieved to hear people shouting “*Habemus Papam! Habemus Papam!*” which if you know Latin you’ll recognize as “We have a Pope!”

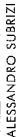
Son of a bitch won on the first ballot. I don’t mean that disrespectfully. Shoo-in of the Fisherman. Our first post-animist Pope.

Let me be the first to say that I think he’s made an excellent start. He has certainly been very understanding and forgiving in the matter of Monsignor Murphy’s nervous breakdown. The strain of having to deal with all the sex scandals had apparently taken its toll on the poor man. So it was Murf after all, and not Bernard Baroom, who had come up with the idea of promoting an American Pope, and all to get people’s minds off the scandals. Big-league spin. Nothing small about it. Whatever your views on all this, you have to admire that much. At any rate, Murf saw his chance when his billionaire confessee Bernard told him about the insider trading and fraud and other sins. Instead of the usual two Hail Marys and three Our Fathers and a good Act of Contrition, Murf told him he had to get an American Pope elected. And Baroom called me.

It worked, in a way. They’re not talking about the sex scandals anymore. Also the new Pope has said that no purpose would be served by dwelling on all this, and that it’s time to move on, and I’m all for that.

Anyway, LaMoyne just buzzed me to say that Martha Stewart’s on the line, so I’d better take the call. ▀

Christopher Buckley is a novelist who lives in Washington, D.C. His novel No Way to Treat a First Lady was published last year. His book Washington Schlepped Here, to be published this month, is a guide to the nation’s capital.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS *Wartime Bailout Kit*

In 1942, twenty-one-year-old David Witts dropped out of the University of Texas Law School and enlisted in the Army Air Corps, where he attained the rank of second lieutenant and was assigned to the 2nd Emergency Rescue Squadron of the 13th Air Force. Based in New Guinea and later in the Philippines, the squadron flew amphibious PBY-5As and was charged, Witts explains, with a simple mission: "To rescue downed fliers—Army, Navy, Marines—anywhere in the Pacific." It was dangerous work; as Witts says, "The minute we left the airstrip, we were behind enemy lines."

In anticipation of the possibility that rescue fliers might themselves need to be rescued at some point, the Army attached a "bailout kit" to each of their parachutes, as it did for all its combat aviators. The kit was waterproof and, Witts says, "very, very compact," and yet the Army managed to pack an extraordinary amount of stuff into it: a whistle and a signaling mirror and several compasses of varying sizes and an area map printed on silk or rayon; fishing hooks and fishing line and a slingshot for hunting and a spear assembly for hunting and fishing and a combination knife and saw and a spit assembly for cooking; matches and, in case they should fail or

get wet, a magnifying glass; bouillon cubes and chocolate and cigarettes and a sewing kit and sulfa pills and Atabrine tablets and eye ointment and an adhesive absorbent compress and a small bottle of Mercurochrome. "That kit was the salvation of a great many guys," Witts says. He would know: he rescued a lot of them, completing fifty missions in all.

Fortunately, Witts never had to use his own bailout kit. “The PBY-5A was a very sturdy plane,” he recalls. “We got shot up, but never shot down.” In fact, he never even opened his kit until half a century after he flew his last mission, when he cleaned out his attic, went through his old footlocker, and donated its entire contents to the archive of the Hoover Institution, in Palo Alto, California. The archive’s director, Elena Danielson, says that the bailout kit and the rest of Witts’s war souvenirs fit in perfectly with the archive’s objective, which is to preserve primary-source materials of recent history. “When people see something like this,” she says, “they understand that the war was fought and won by real people, one by one.” —*RICHARD RUBIN*

Richard Rubin's book Confederacy of Silence: A True Tale of the New Old South (2002) will be out in paperback in June.

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James Wood examines *The Spoils of Poynton*, *What Maisie Knew*, *The Awkward Age*, and *The Other House*—four “peculiar” novels by Henry James, now collected in a single volume

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No Exit

Random Family, by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc, reviewed by Martha Spaulding

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Gaudy Butterfly in a Drab Chrysalis

Perry Anderson finds William Taubman's new biography, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, strong on character but weak on context

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

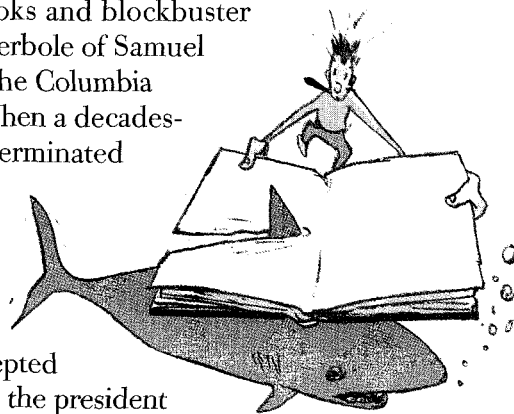
What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

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In January the media and publishing world was, in its endearingly self-absorbed way, abuzz over the firing of Ann Godoff as head of the Random House Trade Group—a story that *The New York Times* decided warranted not one, not two, but ten articles. The real reasons for the dismissal of Godoff, who is widely regarded as a high-brow publisher of prestigious books (if not entirely justifiably—last year she spent \$3 million for the second book by the authors of *The Nanny Diaries*), are complex and ultimately unascertainable. But the literary community seized on the event as an occasion to further bewail the decline of what it calls “serious” publishing. Verlyn Klinkenborg’s hysteria on the *Times* editorial page—“Publishing is now driven wholly by the search for blockbuster books and blockbuster profits”—was seconded by the hyperbole of Samuel Freedman, the associate dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism: “When a decades-long career like Godoff’s can be terminated ... the chill runs through the corridors of all large publishing houses and into the home offices of thousands of serious writers.” Well, that chill didn’t extend to “all” publishers—Godoff soon accepted Penguin Putnam’s offer to become the president and publisher of a new imprint created for her, specializing in “serious” (that word again) nonfiction.

More important, though, it is simply untrue that the number of worthwhile titles published has diminished with the consolidation of publishing houses, the popularity of the Oprah and Today Show Book Clubs, and the proliferation of such chain bookstores as Borders, Barnes & Noble, and Books-A-Million. As the editor of this section, I spend several days every month combing through thousands of titles; I’m astonished that so much literary fiction and what can only be described as decidedly noncommercial nonfiction issues from an industry supposedly obsessed with the bottom line—and that publishing houses pay such large advances for so many of these books. Indeed, although the Authors Guild, the Authors Guild Foundation, and the Open Society Institute commissioned a report that seemed designed to expose the supposed crisis in “midlist” publishing (the book-business term for literary fiction and serious nonfiction), the report in fact



concluded in 2000 that midlist sales continue to grow (although not quite as fast as best-seller sales). “More midlist titles than ever before are available,” it found, “from both large commercial publishers and small presses. More and more shelf space is devoted to selling them.” This is of course obvious to anyone who browses in those loathed chain bookstores—which devote far more shelf and display space to literary than to pulp fiction, and which make special efforts to promote obscure titles and unknown authors. And don’t forget that the distinction between “best-selling” and “midlist” is fluid. In the last two years, for example, two of the biggest fiction best sellers were Jonathan Franzen’s *The Corrections* and Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*, both indisputably literary. Surely publishers should not be faulted because of the good taste of the reading public.

Some who perceive a dumbing-down in publishing concede the superabundance of literary titles available but assert that for a variety of reasons readers’ attention is diverted from midlist titles toward blockbusters. Certainly, a commercial publisher will more widely advertise a novel by John Grisham (or Michael Chabon or Zadie Smith or John Updike or Alice McDermott) than, say, a debut novel translated from German. But a more worrisome problem is how easily attention can be diverted to a small number of those books that are heralded as “serious.” Just as a certain type of person will unthinkingly buy a book anointed by *Good Morning America*, so, too, many self-described thinking readers will unthinkingly choose a title sanctified by *The New York Times* (and just as not all best sellers are bad, not all “serious” books are good—in fact, most aren’t).

To illustrate this, let’s take a look at one of Codoff’s acclaimed titles from last year—David Rockefeller’s *Memoirs*. Anyone in the book business would know that this title would receive a lot of critical attention—and anyone with a brain would know that it’s not worth reading. Rockefeller, a man of conventional and cautious opinions, mediocre intellect, and exceedingly modest writerly ability, may be an important subject for a book, but he’s obviously

not the one to write it. His autobiography is, predictably, completely unrevealing. Yet the *Times*, predictably, ran two reviews and an excerpt. Its coverage undoubtedly helped to propel this soporific and self-important book onto the best-seller list (as such coverage almost certainly did another Codoff title, *Paris 1919*, a book that’s bland, bloated, and—thanks also to a foreword by that darling of the *Charlie Rose* crowd, Richard Holbrooke—overrated).

Book snobs decried the literary clout of Oprah Winfrey—but why aren’t they lamenting the influence of the *Times*, which, while spotlighting the execrable *Memoirs*, overlooked two recent, far more worthy nonfiction titles, Nicholas Orme’s *Medieval Children* and Mark A. Noll’s *America’s God* (a history of American Protestantism), which were in turn ignored by the cultural elite that bemoans the sorry state of serious book publishing? (The United States may be the most religious country in the West, but the cultural tastemakers pay scant attention to books on religion—with the exception of titles on nearly every aspect of Judaism and on some of the unsavory aspects of Catholicism.) Rather than cast stones at publishers, who are releasing more serious titles than ever before, the literary doomsayers should ask themselves why they are failing to read these books.

FICTION

THE DARTS OF CUPID AND OTHER STORIES, by Edith Templeton (Pantheon). We let our readers down with this one. I missed this collection when it was published, last year, and read it only when considering it for a book prize in January. It and Ali Smith’s *Hotel World* are the best works of fiction published in 2002.

The aristocratic, Prague-born Templeton, now in her mid-eighties, has lived in England, India (her second husband, an eminent cardiologist, was the physician to the king of Nepal), and various parts of Europe (her home is now on the Italian Riviera); and her arch, cosmopolitan, and century-spanning fiction resembles that of another aristocratic Central European, Anglophone, neg-

lected writer’s writer: Sybille Bedford. Both authors are gimlet-eyed observers of manners, class distinctions, and relationships among women, but Templeton is also disconcertingly—frighteningly—cold-eyed in her depiction of erotic love. With sharpness and precision the tales here—especially the title story, famously the most explicit work of fiction to have appeared in *The New Yorker* when it was published, in 1968—probe the tangled relationship between love and lust, the violent aspects of desire, and the self-obliterating nature of sexual attachment (which she describes as “both cradle and grave”). Always elegant, usually brittle, jaded but often elegiac (see especially “Equality Cake”), Templeton is an unnerving but utterly commanding writer.

THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, DOUBLE INDEMNITY, MILDRED PIERCE, AND SELECTED STORIES, by James M. Cain, introduction by Robert Polito (Everyman/Knopf). Sharing his “thoughts on writing,” in his recent, flaccid book on the subject, the ever grandiose Norman Mailer declares that “writers must fashion a new peace with the past every day they attempt to write.” Okay. Such a sentence makes one wish, again, that Mailer had followed the advice Tom Wolfe gave him decades ago: “Just sit down and relax and read some James M. Cain and learn how to write a novel.” Although not exactly neglected, Cain remains overshadowed by that other noir writer, Raymond Chandler. But whereas Chandler’s convoluted plots meander and sag, Cain’s, written in the cleanest and sparest prose, accelerate, propelled by nothing more complex than those fathomless sins, lust and avarice. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (tried for obscenity in, of course, Boston) and *Double Indemnity* (made into one of the masterpieces of American film) are almost unbearably taut, but the third novel collected here, *Mildred Pierce*, is uncharacteristically rich. An exploration of the heedlessness of maternal devotion (which, Cain unforgettably shows, can lead to a mother’s sickening realization of her “guilty, leaping joy” that her one child died rather than her other), it’s also the best novel of Los Angeles, a city that Cain, almost alone



among writers of his time, depicted in both fiction and nonfiction with ambivalent, discerning admiration. *Mildred Pierce's* cumulative detail re-creates the intricate, ordinary lives of the small entrepreneurs, real-estate agents, waitresses, and next-door neighbors who made up petit-bourgeois, Middle American Los Angeles. With his inclusion in the Everyman's Library, Cain is, at last, anointed.

HISTORY

EMPIRE, by Niall Ferguson (Basic Books) and **BRITISH IMPERIALISM, 1688–2000**, by P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins (Longman). The history of Britain's empire is in fashion: Simon Schama's volume *The Fate of Empire*, based on his British television documentary series, enjoyed commercial and critical success last year; now comes Ferguson's book, another serious history aimed at the general reader, and another offshoot of a British television documentary. Ferguson, age thirty-eight, is the most gifted and prolific (too prolific) British historian of his generation (and probably the best connected and most entrepreneurial, which largely accounts for the journalistic attention devoted to his work). Even when I think he's wrong—as he was in his *The Pity of War* (see “Was the Great War Necessary?,” May 1999 *Atlantic*)—his writing and insights sparkle. His latest, rather conventional book, which seems somewhat hastily assembled but is enlivened by the author's intelligent defense of the empire's legacy and morality, is a serviceable single-volume chronicle. But discerning readers won't bother with Schama or Ferguson, because they now have easy access to the most scintillating and sophisticated work of British imperial history of the past thirty years. A masterpiece of political economy, Cain and Hopkins's book reassesses more than 300 years of British politics, economics, and social life. Whereas the previous major interpretations of the empire emphasize the Industrial Revolution as a driving force, *British Imperialism* looks instead to the formation of a class of “gentlemanly capitalists,” which from the late seventeenth century determined social norms and held the levers of power in the City

of London, the Bank of England, and Whitehall, engendering a complex of social, economic, and political influences even more powerful and dynamic than the forces created by industrialization. Cain and Hopkins argue persuasively that state policy—in particular Britain's overseas expansion—was geared toward developing and buttressing finance and commerce, not manufacturing. A precise yet wide-ranging dissection of the British establishment, a rich and seminal reinterpretation of the international economy and of the wellsprings of British economic power (the authors show that Britain's strength in financial services preceded the Industrial Revolution and persisted long after the country's manufacturing industries had gone into decline), and a magisterial account of the domestic impulses drawing the British overseas, *British Imperialism*, first published in 1993, was available only in two very expensive paperback volumes (the first volume alone cost \$50). Last year, however, the publishers combined the volumes into a second edition for only \$25. The authors have added a lengthy, detailed, and incisive response to their critics; a section carrying their chronicle up to 2000; and a comparative and theoretical chapter appraising the relationship between empires and contemporary globalization. British imperial history has been thoroughly infected by the faddish jargon, flabby thinking, and flimsy hypotheses of “colonial discourse theory”; Cain and Hopkins instead make material forces the base of their study (as would good, old-fashioned Marxists), and link those to social and political developments. Eschewing the academically trendy, they have written a brilliant, bold, and imaginative work, to be placed on the shelf beside Correlli Barnett's *The Collapse of British Power* and Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians*.

JONATHAN EDWARDS: A LIFE, by George M. Marsden (Yale). Jonathan Edwards is America's most penetrating, rigorous, and subtle theologian, as well as its most literarily accomplished and influential. Marsden, the author of *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, one

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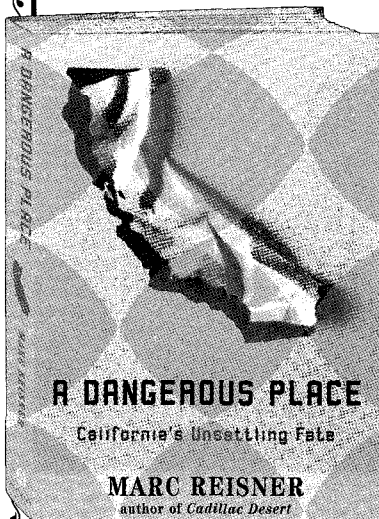
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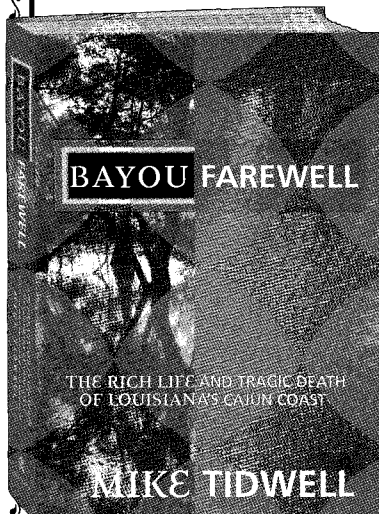
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of the most significant works of cultural history in the past twenty-five years, has now crafted the finest biography of this towering figure. His narrative illuminates Edwards's beliefs and complex intellectual development (this rural Puritan was engrossed in the works of Locke, Newton, and Addison and Steele), his apprehensions and failings, and the anxious frontier where he lived much of his life (two of his cousins were killed in the Deerfield massacre). Whether explicating the doctrinal premises and uses of imagery in Edwards's great sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" or depicting the sophisticated multinational atmosphere of 1720s Manhattan, the Great Awakening that swept through the Connecticut Valley, or the dull terror that gripped Stockbridge as it awaited Indian attack, Marsden guides readers through Edwards's profoundly alien world with authority and fluidity. Such scholarly yet accessible books as this have made Yale the most important and exciting university-press publisher of humanities titles today.

THE FALL OF FRANCE, by Julian Jackson (Oxford). France's sudden and shocking defeat in the spring of 1940 was one of the great calamities in the history of Western democracy. It signaled the end of European autonomy in international politics—thenceforth the Continent's fate would be decided by the superpowers—and it resulted not merely in military ruin but in a political breakdown and a societal collapse, followed by the ignominy of Vichy. For more than sixty years the French assessment of the disaster has consistently engendered political—and moral—recrimination and has occasionally provoked rigorous, even masochistic, self-examination. Jackson's clear and level-headed, if somewhat pedestrian, analysis assesses the social and political, and also the diplomatic, intelligence, and military, context of the catastrophe. (Surprisingly, the author, who wrote a superb, sociologically nuanced account of occupied France, is more penetrating on the latter aspects of his story than he is on the former.) Although Jackson fairly explains all the positions in the scholarly debate surrounding this contentious

subject (which makes his book the best introduction to it), he embraces the revisionist argument that France's fall should be attributed not to the systemic weaknesses of the Third Republic's decadent political culture but, rather, to discrete intelligence failures and to the army's somewhat inflexible mindset. In doing so, though, he too neatly separates the French military from the state and society in which it was embedded. Still, Jackson has written an admirably accessible analytical history of a complex and fraught event.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

THE PARTHENON, by Mary Beard (Harvard). Wry and imaginative, this gem of a book deconstructs the most famous building in Western history. Beard elucidates (as well as she can) the history of the ancient building, the functions—church, mosque, sanctuary, ammunition dump—it has served since antiquity, and the place it has held in the European imagination in the modern era. With éclat she dashes most of what we think we know about the ancient Greeks' building: the iconic image of the Parthenon held today is a product of a terribly inaccurate reconstruction in the 1920s, a reconstruction now being painstakingly undone; the building was far more a monument to Athenian imperialism than to Athenian democracy; this austere and classically restrained structure was in antiquity more renowned for the (by modern standards) vulgar, giant gold-and-ivory-covered wooden statue of Athena it contained, which cost more than the temple itself. In so doing, Beard reveals just how alien, and in many ways repulsive, the classical Greeks are to us, and just how little we know about them. Scholars aren't even sure of the Parthenon's original purpose: should it be regarded as a temple, or more as a treasury, stuffed as it was with gaudy bric-a-brac? This slim work wears its erudition lightly as it discloses what Beard calls "those tantalizing processes of investigation, deduction, empathy, reconstruction and sheer guesswork that must be the hallmarks of any study of classics and the classical past." 

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.

HOLY WRIT

*Recent writers on Islam need to be more stringent in their criticism.
Stephen Schwartz is an exception*

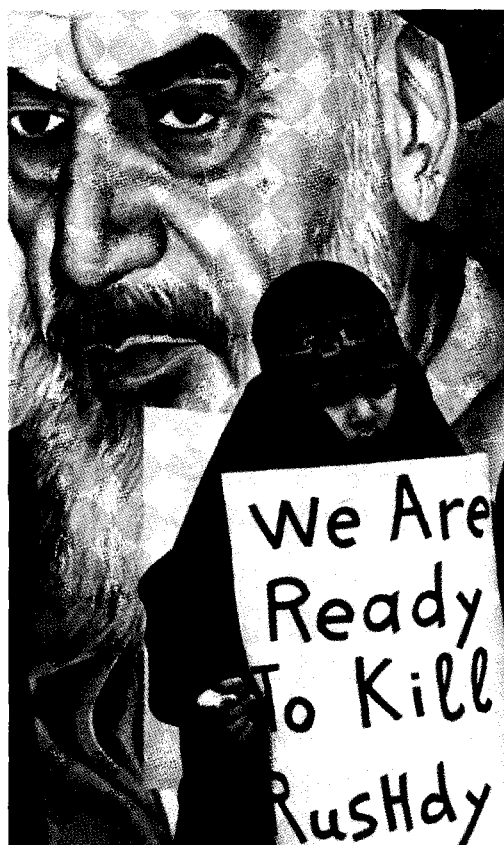
BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

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For a great many people, myself included, the engagement between open society and violent Islamic theocratism began not on September 11, 2001, but on February 14, 1989. On that day the Ayatollah Khomeini issued his *fatwa*—or, to phrase the matter in secular terms, offered a bounty in his own name as a reward for murder. The announced murder victim was to be Salman Rushdie, whose novel *The Satanic Verses* had attempted with high success to employ holy writ for literary purposes. The Ayatollah had not—indeed, could not have—read the book, but he believed the report that it contained a profane and obscene reference to the prophet Muhammad. (In one passage a man clearly depicted as a deluded loser fantasizes luridly about the prophet's many wives.) As a consequence of the *fatwa*, inflamed mobs burned the book and called for Rushdie's death, and teams of assassins (promised the reward of paradise if they pulled off the job or died in the attempt) managed to slay or injure Rushdie's translators and publishers in Italy, Japan, and Norway. An underplayed aspect of this gruesome development was the appearance for the first time of fanatical Muslim crowds on European streets.

This was a fairly blunt and frontal challenge to the ideas of liberty and pluralism on which the West likes to pride itself. But the responses to it only partially anticipated those to September 11. Invested as they were and are in the concepts of literary autonomy and abhorrence of censorship, most liberals reacted with particular shock to this literally fundamental assault. But there were those—most notably John Berger and John le Carré—who declared that Rushdie was the author of his own victimhood. He had offended the adherents of a great religion that was a voice of the poor and downtrodden. He had done so, numerous critics uttered darkly, “knowing what he was doing.” His

book was the root cause of the *fatwa*. The Cardinal of New York, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, and the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* united in defining the problem as one more of blasphemy than of terrorism. President George H.W. Bush, invited to comment when barely recovered from the Iran



arms-for-hostages racket, said that his response would depend on any threat to “American interests.” And the neoconservative school of columnists was almost unanimous in jeering at Rushdie for being hoist by his own petard. His sympathy for “Third World” causes, it was loftily said, should help him to appreciate the irony. And the irony was at his expense, so it served him right. Thus wrote Norman Podhoretz, Charles Krauthammer, A. M. Rosenthal, and others.

All this seems like yesterday to me. On the whole, I thought it was the most worthwhile fight I had ever been involved in. It taught me a lot, and it gave me a warning. And one might pause to notice that for all the talk about wounded feelings and outraged religious sensibilities, the *fatwa* has since been disowned by the Iranian government. Moreover, the book is in print, the author is flourishing and traveling freely, and the imams and ayatollahs of Tehran and Qom and Mashad, increasingly repudiated by their benighted subjects, now have more pressing things with which to concern themselves than literary criticism conducted with a gun. Even before this,

writers in the Arab and Muslim world as diverse as Naguib Mahfouz and Mahmoud Darwish had looked on Rushdie as a symbol of their own unending combat for free expression. The chief thing that depressed me, however, even in those hazardous days when all the good news lay in the future, was the sectarian partisanship shown by many Muslim immigrants in the West. The idea of the multicultural society was probably the most successful extension of European and American liberalism in the postwar period. It was emblematic of many things beyond itself. Without it, indeed, Rushdie—and Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy and numerous others—would not have become so much a part of our cultural life in the first place. Yet now the hunt for al Qaeda and its surrogates is conducted as much in the meaner streets of London, Hamburg, Paris, Rome,

and Chicago as it is in the caves and defiles of the North-West Frontier.

This vertiginous thought, with its several analogues in the “clash of civilizations” argument, has not yet met with its defining author. Most writing thus far either has been a product of immediate events or has been subsumed into them by becoming a part of the battle itself. This is conspicuously the case with Michel Houellebecq, whose novel *Platform* was almost proscribed by law

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in France before being properly distributed. His previous works of fiction *Whatever* and *Atomised* showed Houellebecq to be a highly evolved product of post-1960s disillusionment in France—at once a throwback to the absurdist and existentialist mood of the 1950s and a mirror to the “Who cares?” attitudes of late postmodernism. The emphasis on a slightly toneless sexuality, with the moral thermometer descending as the pace of the jaded libido is ratcheted upward, made me recall Hubert Selby

Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn*

for the first time in decades, with perhaps a tincture of *Last Tango in Paris*, Céline, Baudelaire, and the opening chapters of Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. In *Platform*, Houellebecq undertakes to explore the fatuities of the modern tourist industry, from its openly pedophile version to its ostentatious and hypocritical “eco”-prefixed one. Doing little more than registering what his bored senses convey, Houellebecq's narrator, Michel, discovers that his old father has probably been murdered by a Muslim, and notices that foul crimes are being committed all the time in Paris, usually against women and often by gangs of North Africans. In his more or less pointless travels

to various Asian locales to study the profit margins of the holiday business, he flies over Afghanistan at night.

Through the window, you could see nothing but pitch black, of course. In any case the Taliban were probably all in bed stewing in their own filth. “Goodnight, Taliban, good night ... sweet dreams,” I whispered before swallowing a second sleeping pill.

That was published in France just before September 11. Somewhat later in the book Michel finds himself willing to give grudging affection to a woman named Valérie who is soon afterward killed in a Muslim *jihād* raid on a beach resort. (The novel's first English translation was published in uncom-

fortably good time for the al Qaeda massacre of Australian holidaymakers in the pseudo-paradise of Bali.) Michel, who is badly hurt in the attack, thereupon permits himself the following reflection:

It is certainly possible to remain alive animated simply by a desire for vengeance; many people have lived that way. Islam had wrecked my life, and Islam was certainly something that I could hate. In the days that followed, I devoted myself to trying to feel hatred for Muslims. I was quite

good at it, and I started to follow the international news again. Every time I heard that a Palestinian terrorist, or a Palestinian child or a pregnant Palestinian woman had been gunned down in the Gaza Strip, I felt a quiver of enthusiasm at the thought of one less Muslim in the world. Yes, it was possible to live like this.

As in *The Satanic Verses*, the thoughts are those of a person who is recovering from grave physical and mental damage. They are immediately retracted on the following page, where, after spending time talking with a Jordanian, Michel is struck by a “simple thought” that is “sufficient to dispel my hatred.”

The “thought,” as it happens, is that Western capitalism will erode the Muslim

world by means of innovation, temptation, and corruption, and that the long-term victory of materialism over fanaticism is inevitable. A point of view like this is going to be difficult to censor. Houellebecq could have made his life easier had he not also given an interview to the magazine *Lire* in which he described Islam as “the dumbest religion,” as compared with, say, the ones derived only from the Bible, which “at least is beautifully written because the Jews have a heck of a literary talent.” This certainly shows a gift for inclusiveness, if only in giving offense. Demands for his prosecution immediately emerged, and the imputation of racism was raised—oddly, in view of Islam's much voiced claim to

Books discussed in this essay

THE SATANIC VERSES

by Salman Rushdie
Viking

PLATFORM

by Michel Houellebecq
forthcoming from Knopf

THE RAGE AND THE PRIDE

by Oriana Fallaci
Rizzoli

AMONG THE BELIEVERS and BEYOND BELIEF

by V. S. Naipaul
Knopf
Random House

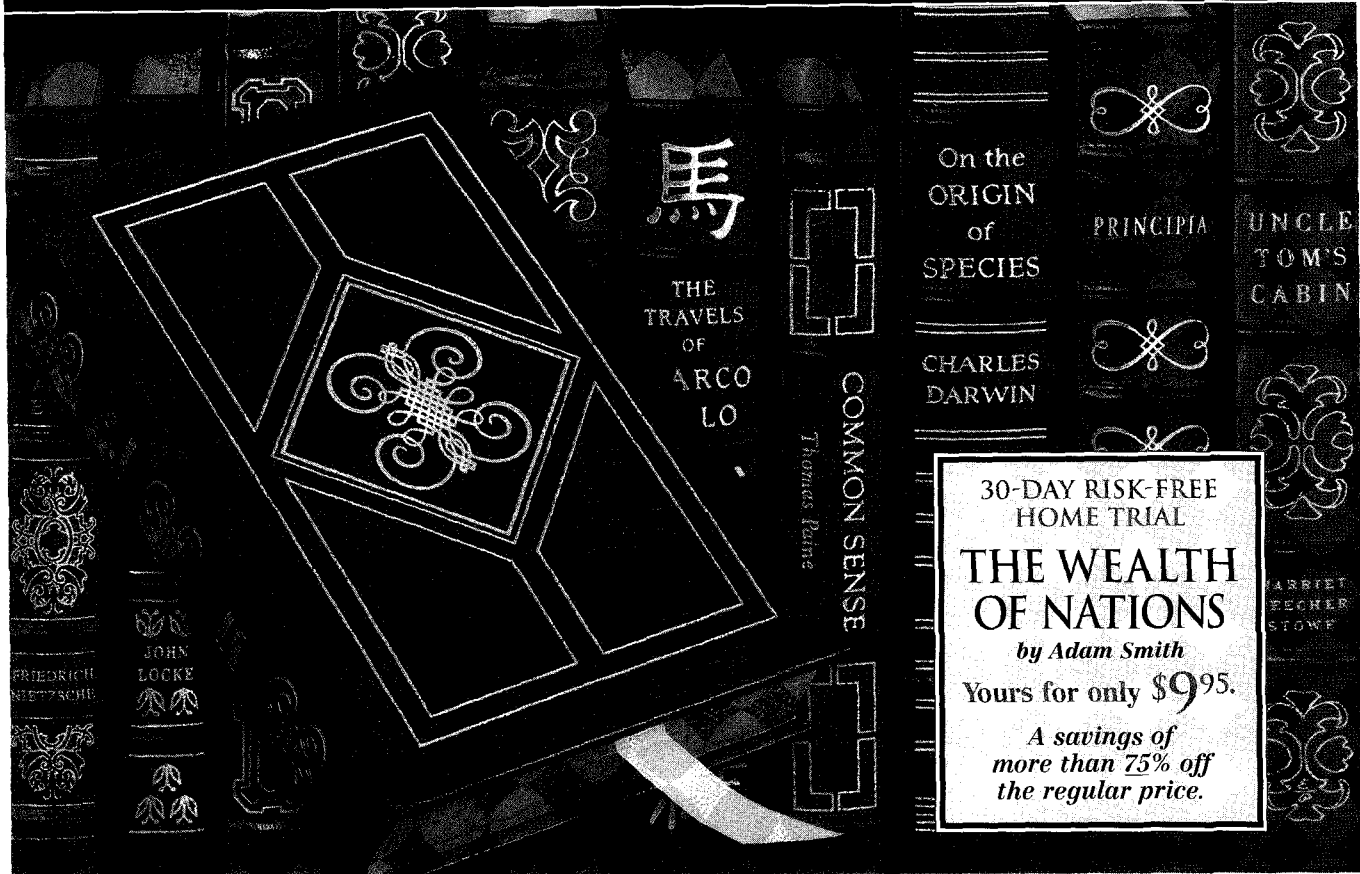
WHY I AM NOT A MUSLIM

by Ibn Warraq
Prometheus Books

THE TWO FACES OF ISLAM

by Stephen Schwartz
Doubleday

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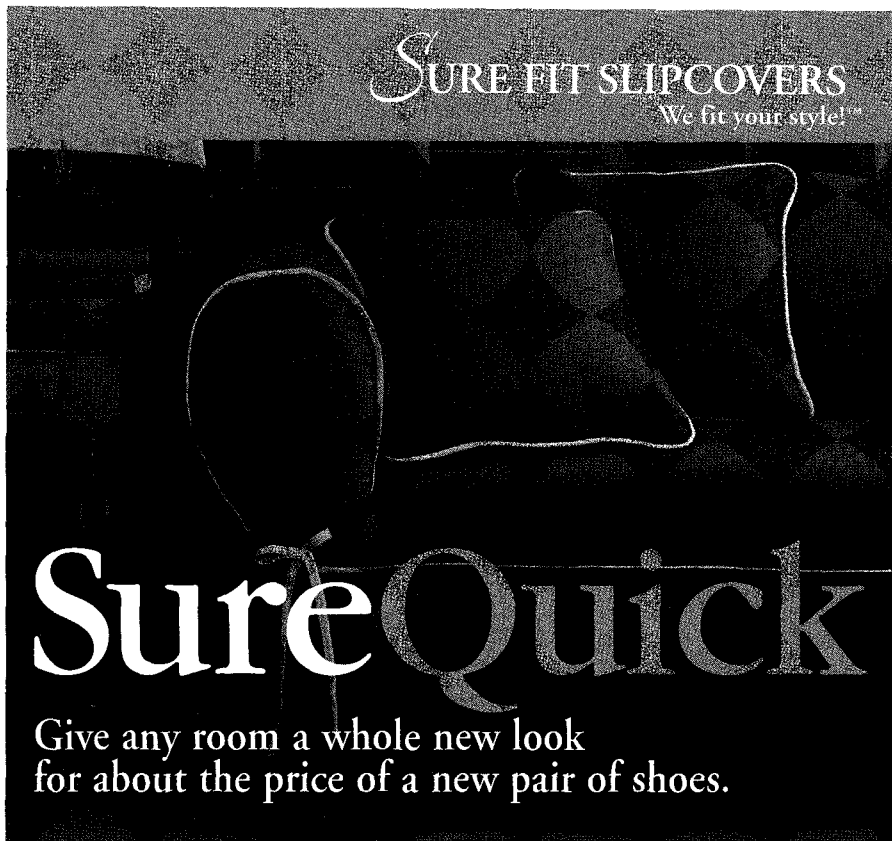
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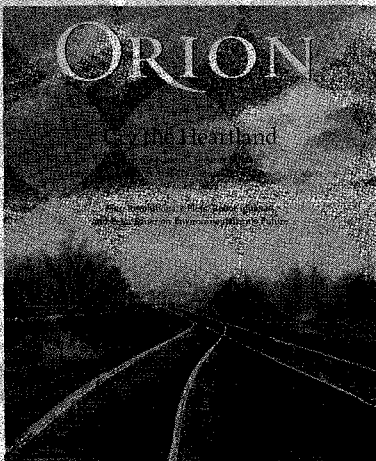


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be universal. His expressed sentiments in the book and in the interview did indeed prompt a lawsuit against Houellebecq in the Parisian courts, brought by various Muslim and "anti-racist" organizations. The case failed, mainly because the words were deemed to be insufficiently abusive or inciting.

Houellebecq's work is cynical and banal but also literary and complex, and its characters contain contradictions. The same cannot be said for the writing of Oriana Fallaci, the celebrated Italian journalist whose high-octane interviews with powerful men had such *éclat* in the seventies, and whose memoir of her dead lover, the Greek resistance fighter Alexander Panagoulis, might be described as a classic of hysterical materialism. If utterance is given to a foul thought in the pages of *The Rage and the Pride*, the author is only too eager to claim it for herself. Written in the hot flush that overtook her on September 11, and originally published as a screed in the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*, this is a sort of primer in how not to write about Islam. Fallaci claims in her introduction that in order to shorten the diatribe for newspaper purposes she "set aside the most violent passages." I wonder what those passages can have been like; the residue is replete with an obsessive interest in excrement, disease, sexual mania, and insectlike reproduction, insofar as these apply to Muslims in general and to Muslim immigrants in Europe in particular. A sampling, which preserves her style and punctuation and spelling:

The fad or rather the hypocrisy, the shit, that calls "local tradition" the infibulation. I mean the bestial practice by which, in order to prevent them from enjoying sex, Moslems cut young girls' clitoris and sew up the large lips of the vulvas. All that remains is a tiny opening through which the poor creatures urinate, and imagine the torment of a defloration ... thank God I never had any sentimental or sexual or friendly rapport with an Arab man. In my opinion there is something in his brothers of faith which repels the women of good taste.

In other words—and there are a great many of them—Fallaci ignores her

own pro forma injunction to remember that Islam is a faith, not a race. Her horror is for the shabby, swarthy stranger who uses the street as a bathroom (she can't stay off this subject) and eyes passing girls in a lascivious manner. I've read it all before, in histories of migration. You can even find it in the fastidious revulsion with which assimilated European and American Jews greeted their lank-haired, scrofulous brethren when they came shuffling in from the Pale of Settlement.

It takes only a moment of reflection—the very moment that Fallaci did not permit herself, or of which she is incapable—to establish that genital mutilation is also practiced by animists and Christians and is forbidden or not practiced in many Muslim societies. Or that stoning to death—which is mandated in the Old Testament—is (like infibulation) unmentioned in the Koran. Or that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are the most industrious, enterprising, and law-abiding immigrants to Britain, and display the most reverence for education. I might add that they are much keener on daily ablutions than many of their happy-go-lucky Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic hosts. (The injunction to wash *is* actually in the stipulations of Islam ...) The Turks in Germany must be among the sturdiest of all Europeans. And this is in a generation or so. Among them, as among newer arrivals in the United States, Holland, France, and Italy, there is an argument about the place of faith and the role of the secular state. But it is an argument within the Islamic world, not an argument between it and some imagined "Christendom." Fallaci's book, too, has brought down calls for censorship that ought to be steadily resisted: Islamic groups claiming the protection of multiculturalism should (and, I predict, will) appreciate that they must honor the same precept themselves—and also see to it that Islamic societies make more room for dissent and pluralism.

An author whose scrutiny of the Muslim world has been more prolonged is V. S. Naipaul, now knighted by the Queen and garlanded by the Nobel committee. His two travelogues *Among the Believers* (1981) and *Beyond Belief* (1998) have taken and retaken

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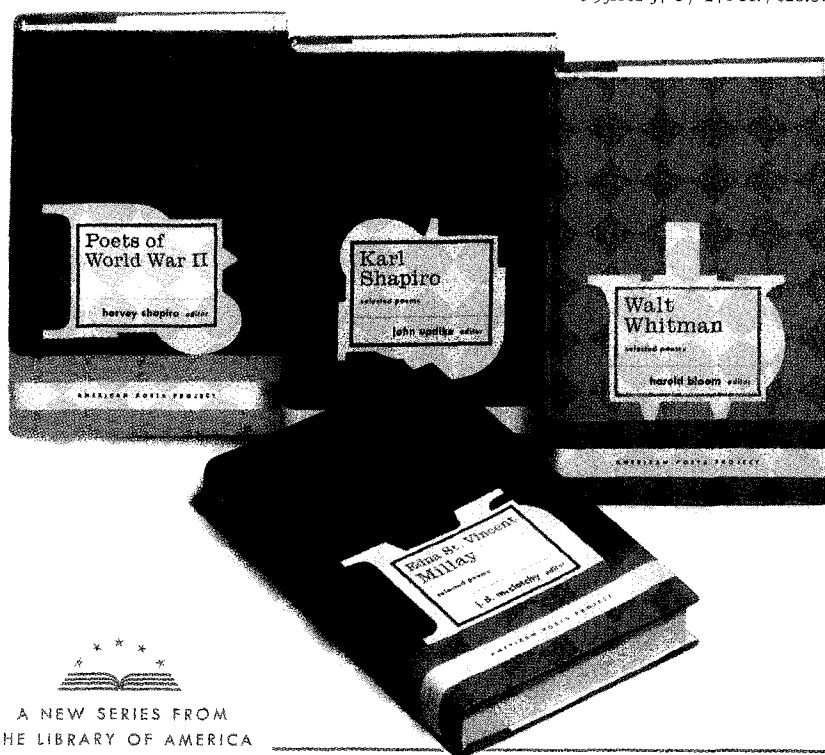
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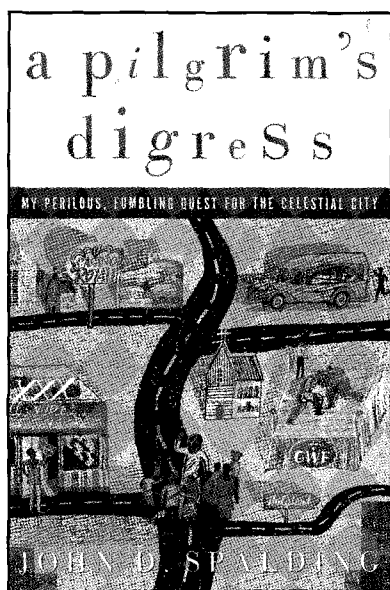
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Sir Vidia to Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. If one can make a very rough distinction between the two extended narratives, one might say that whereas in the first book—written in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution against the Shah—he identified Islam with insurgency, in the second one he approached it more as a colonial or imperial authority. It would appear that his personal views have meanwhile stiffened somewhat. In *Beyond Belief* he stated rather baldly,

There probably has been no imperialism like that of Islam and the Arabs. The Gauls, after five hundred years of Roman rule, could recover their old gods and reverences; those beliefs hadn't died; they lay just below the Roman surface. But Islam seeks as an article of the faith to erase the past; the believers in the end honor Arabia alone; they have nothing to return to.

that existed before the Mogul conquest, mobs licensed or incited by the chauvinistic Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtra Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) demolished the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, and have since made a spirited attempt to profane the Taj Mahal—the special symbol of the Muslim epoch. Of the first vandalism Naipaul said that it was part of a "mighty creative process." He has since spoken warmly of the emergence of a thoroughgoing sectarian and ancestralist politics, which essentially regards the Muslim citizens of India as interlopers. This would mean, among other things, that Urdu, the native tongue of Salman Rushdie, was a language of barbaric aliens. So it goes; Rushdie was denounced as a tool of Islamic fundamentalism when he criticized earlier threats to the Babri mosque in 1988.

One might suppose that the promise that the misery and futility of existence can be overcome, combined with the assurance of a benevolent God, would make a person happy. But such appears not to be the case.

At about the time that he received the Nobel Prize, in 2001, he updated this to say that "[Islam] has had a calamitous effect on converted peoples. To be converted you have to destroy your past, destroy your history. You have to stamp on it, you have to say 'my ancestral culture does not exist, it doesn't matter.'" Now, it is true that zealots under the influence of Wahhabism organized the destruction of the twin Buddha statues at Bamiyan in Afghanistan (another action that should have served as a warning), and that there notoriously exists a violent fantasy of re-creating a Muslim empire. It's also true that all religions have employed the desecration and erasure of previous faiths in order to establish themselves—and that schismatic forces within the major faiths have despoiled one another's holy places. Either one opposes this or one does not, and Naipaul has been insufficiently criticized in the West for his role as an apologist for the Hindu nationalist movement in India. Aiming to re-establish the supposedly organic, cyclical, holistic India

I frankly do not trust Naipaul, even as an eyewitness. (He candidly says, "I don't need to read the scholars," and bluffly claims to rely on direct experience rather than the study of history or religion.) In *Beyond Belief* there is a venomous caricature of the life and opinions of my friend Ahmed Rashid, from which one could never guess that he was among the first and best Pakistani writers to warn of the lethal danger posed by the Taliban. Reading Naipaul's contemptuous account of his more recent visit to Tehran, one would have no sense at all of the burgeoning movement for liberalization that was afoot even as he wrote. It seems quite extraordinary to tackle the subject of Islam and modernity without even stopping in Turkey or Bosnia or Egypt, where it can hardly be argued that all pre-Islamic culture has been abolished, let alone that Arab imperialism is the defining mode. And what of Algeria, where an Arab and Berber society has forcibly thrown back a fundamentalist counterrevolution? (It is the gaunt losers in that combat who

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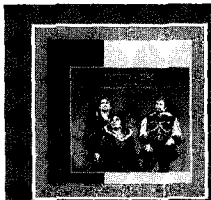
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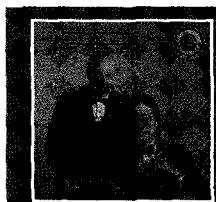
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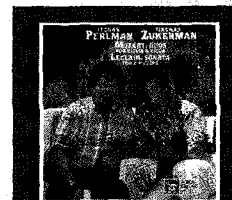
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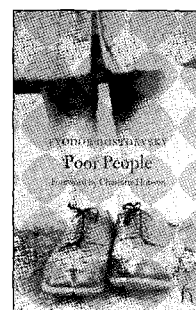
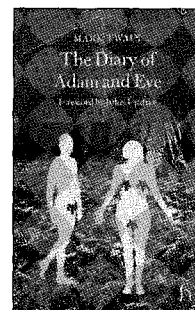
have now emigrated to London and Paris: another element in the unending weave of paradoxes and unforeseen consequences to which globalization has abruptly introduced us.) But not only does Naipaul fail to give an account of the multifaceted nature of the Muslim world; his books contain no sense of the impending menace that was, all this time, readying and gathering itself for September 11. He didn't visit Saudi Arabia or the Gulf states either. And he skipped Jerusalem.

This and other lapses are to be regretted, because Islam needs criticism more stringent than what it has been receiving from these writers. It is a religion that makes very large claims for itself. It claims to offer a total program of personal and social conduct. In one way—which makes it especially objectionable to secularists—it confirms and reasserts the tenets of Moses and Jesus and the Virgin Mary, all of whom are taken more or less at face value in the Koran, or “recitation.” In another way—which makes it especially indigestible for believers of other faiths—it asserts itself as a transcendence, and therefore as a partial negation, of these beliefs. Moreover, it is by far the youngest and most energetic of the monotheisms; its founder is more of a historical figure than a mythical one; its lack of a formal church order or Catholic-like hierarchy makes the emergence of a “Protestant” or “Reformation” Islam unlikely if not inconceivable. Finally, of the three monotheistic systems of spiritual obedience, Islam contains in its mandates and injunctions the most frequent references—indeed, exhortations—to proselytization.

Nothing can alter the fact, however, that religion is man-made. So Islam is schismatic to a considerable degree, and contains many more warring subdivisions than just the well-known and deeply felt division between Sunni and Shia. (One would rather be a Jew or a Christian in Pakistan than a member of the heretic Ahmadi sect, which is assiduously persecuted.) Islam is, despite its apparent inflexibility, quite adaptable to local conditions. Its best historic moments, in Andalusia and Bosnia and Alexandria, have involved synthesis with other faiths and cultures. We are all now heavily in-

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vested in the outcome of the civil war or civil wars that are taking place within the Muslim world. My favorite book on Islam is the rationalist critique *Why I Am Not a Muslim*, published under the pseudonym Ibn Warraq and written by a recovering Pakistani ex-zealot who was originally shaken loose from his faith by the Rushdie affair. I understand, however, that a mass conversion to philosophical skepticism is the least likely outcome of the present crisis.

In default of this, I would heartily recommend *The Two Faces of Islam*, by Stephen Schwartz. A Jew who has been partially seduced by Sufism (and, I should add, a man with whom I have a friendship), Schwartz has set himself to understand the profound differences that express themselves in distinctions of Koranic interpretation. For a considerable time before the assault on American civil society he had been preparing readers for the affront—simultaneously “radical” and “reactionary”—of the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance. Everybody now knows of the nexus of “charities” and *madrasahs* through which indoctrination, sectarianism, and frenzied prophecy have been promulgated with the help of petro-dollars. A less familiar story is the resistance to the Wahhabi cult by pious and sincere Muslims in Central Asia, the Balkans, and elsewhere. His commitment on this side of the conflict sometimes leads Schwartz to write slightly euphemistically about Wahhabism’s foes—most notably the Shia clerics in Iran. But he has done a masterly job of identifying and isolating the discrepant traditions within the faith.

Religion of every kind involves the promise that the misery and futility of existence can be overcome or even transfigured. One might suppose that the possession of such a magnificent formula, combined with the tremendous assurance of a benevolent God, would make a person happy. But such appears not to be the case: unease and insecurity and rage seem to keep up with blissful certainty, and even to outpace it. The secular writers I have mentioned may sometimes give way to vulgarity and worse, but at least they take their angst for granted. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair. His most recent book is Why Orwell Matters (2002).



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*The later Henry James was a master of technique.
But how good a novelist was he?*

BY JAMES WOOD

.....

The story of Henry James's fruitless flirtation with the theater has been so often told that it has become folkloric, invoked and repeated by generations of marveling Jamesians. Everyone knows the tale of the first night, in London, of his historical play *Guy Domville* (1895)—how the nervous playwright spent the evening down the road at the Wildely successful new play *An Ideal Husband*, by James's despised rival, the "mechanical Oscar"; how he finally slipped into his own theater just as the performance was ending; how he was led on stage by the play's actor-manager, ostensibly to enjoy the curtain call but in reality to receive the boos and jeers of a large proportion of the audience; how a few moments earlier, when this same actor-manager had declaimed from the stage, "I'm the *last*, my lord, of the Domvilles!" a cry had come from the seats: "It's a bloody good thing y'are!"

Leon Edel, who tells this story well in his five-volume biography of James, fails to mention only one detail: that James's play was preceded in the same program by a one-act comedy written by a certain Julian Field, titled *Too Happy By Half*. That tells us, in four words, what the mandarin moralist was up against in his quixotic campaign amid the lights of the West End; he had about as much chance with his audience as Don Quixote had with his gang of convicts. *Guy Domville* was his only original play to make it to the boards. He had loaded it with all his longing for popular success. He was never seriously involved in the theater again.

Few writers have been as reliably amnestied as Henry James. From the 1940s to the 1970s he was steadily enshrined as both the greatest American novelist and the most solid object of academic study. There was something cultish about the way modern American

critics talked about "the Master" and his exquisite refinements; it was palpably painful for them to admit that James ever blotted a line. Edel's biography was the breviary of that cult, and it was Edel who—with some help from James himself—converted James's disastrous pursuit of theatrical success into a narrative of the novelist's failing at success but ultimately succeeding at failure. James, it was argued, took from his many wasted years of playwriting a new style of novel writing: one based on what he called the "divine principle of the Scenario." Plundering his own efforts at

HENRY JAMES: NOVELS
1896–1899

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stagecraft, he began to cut away all extraneous detail, to write only in dramatic scenes, and to make his dialogue wholly germane to the thematic forwarding of the story. The most glorious results of this late, post-theater period are the last novels: *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). But the immediate results, the first fruits, are *The Spoils of Poynton*, *What Maisie Knew*, and *The Awkward Age*, written from 1895 to 1899 and now collected, with *The Other House* (1896), in a useful single volume by The Library of America.

There is some justice in the idea that the theatrical experiment "rescued" James at a pivotal moment in his life. He had been interested for many years both in the theater and in certain popular novelists, especially those who wrote extensively in dialogue. "I have worked like a horse—far harder than anyone will ever know—over the whole mystery of 'technique,'" he wrote to William James, referring to his intense study of questions of dramaturgy. In 1882 he had turned *Daisy Miller* into a play, though it was never produced. In the early 1890s he was led toward Ibsen, whom he admired, though with the usual precise flutter of Jamesian qualifications: "so

dry a view of life, so indifferent a vision of the comedy of things." Ibsen, he felt, wrote "moral tales in dialogue." James, one feels, wanted to write novels in dialogue and then stage them.

But it is still an open question—*isn't it?*—whether James was a great writer of dialogue. He rightly complained that all Wilde's characters spoke like Wilde; but many of James's characters, especially in the late work, sound like James. The particular difficulty, and the difficult reward, of late James is the way in which he transfers his own acute sensitivity to verbal calibration onto his characters: they become Chief Justices of the word, forever raising to moral scrutiny certain anointed terms and phrases. This is what gives late James its strongly philosophical flavor. Most readers learn not to read this speech as realistic dialogue and instead consider it as essentially continuous with all the other language that surrounds it on the page—a borderless region of inquiry. His fictional dialogue needs his fictional nondialogue to apologize for it, as it were. One can sense this just by looking at the way that James, even in the supposedly "dramatic" novels collected in this volume, is always restlessly confirming his characters' speech: "she passionately asseverated" (this is at one of the most obviously passionate moments of *What Maisie Knew*, when Maisie is clearly asseverating); "[she] wonderingly moaned"; "she helplessly wailed"; "she then simply ejaculated."

Orphaned from its larger family of prose, the dialogue in James's plays can seem precious, a silken music for cloth ears. Whatever the reason, popular success in the theater was never to come his way. In 1894 he published four unproduced plays—something of an admission of failure for a writer as distinguished and famous as James then was. By February of 1895, a month after the *Guy Domville* collapse, James had abandoned the theater and was beginning to speculate about how he might turn his recently acquired knowledge to fresh use. He wrote *The Spoils of Poynton* over the next several months (it was serialized in this magazine from April to October of 1896) and immediately afterward began work on *The Other House*, which was de-



veloped from a discarded play scenario. *What Maisie Knew* followed a year later, *The Turn of the Screw* (not part of this collection) in 1898, and *The Awkward Age* in 1899.

The four novels in this collection are indeed peculiar ones—and very peculiar ones to come from Flaubert's great (if critical) disciple, because they are distinctly anti-Flaubertian. Exposition, for example, is starved to a thin dramatic minimum, though people—or certain people—are flamboyantly and sharply described. The formidable and morally questionable women who dominate most of these novels—Mrs. Gereth in *The Spoils of Poynton*, Maisie's mother and stepmother in *What Maisie Knew*, and Mrs. Brookenham in *The Awkward Age*—are painted with fitting luridness. But James has hardly any interest here in setting up characters in the usual visual way, by piling details of clothing and gesture and face on top of one another. Instead he selects one or two attributes and then works them until a strange, grotesque essence is achieved.

He was clearly influenced in this by Dickens's genius for caricature, though he affected to have little time for Dickens. Thus Maisie's mother, Ida Farange, is seized, descriptively, by her eyes: "like Japanese lanterns swung under festive arches." Later in the book we read that "her huge eyes, her red lips, the intense marks in her face formed an illumination as distinct and public as a lamp set in a window." One of her lovers, the unfortunate, heavily moustached Mr. Perriam, is seen as a Dickensian gargoyle: "He seemed also to have moustaches over his eyes, which, however, by no means prevented these polished little globes from rolling round the room as if they had been billiard-balls impelled by Ida's celebrated stroke." (Ida is known in society for her skill at billiards.)

If James's characters are allowed the odd descriptive donation, his settings are not. As in a play, most of them are domestic rooms, and these rooms are hardly mentioned. Only when an object, such as a picture, is important to the action is it included in the visual sweep. Poynton, a great house full of immaculate treasures, has hardly any physical presence in the novel; we have

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to infer the beauty and preciousness of these “spoils” from the intensity with which the characters battle over them. In *What Maisie Knew*, Maisie is taken to the great Exhibition at Earl’s Court, an event that Flaubert would have researched, as he researched the agricultural fair in *Madame Bovary*, to get the many details exactly right. But James tosses off the entire spectacle in one sentence, as “a collection of extraordinary foreign things, in tremendous gardens, with illuminations, bands, elephants, switchbacks and side-shows.” That’s it, essentially. He is interested in what his subjects make of this show, not in what he, the writer, can make of it.

The result—for all that James’s late style is thought of as a braided nest of interminable additions and qualifications—is in fact an art of great purification. It is striking just how much the novels do without. Focus is all, and the focus is only on what James once called (in his notebook) “something important ... something intimate, something vital.” This is an art of the essence. The reader, used to being fattened by Flaubert and Zola on big visual spreads, is forced to become a lean decipherer who must imagine the various visual contexts, using the characters as clues. The modernism of this style lies in its frank intellectualism, in its admission that reading has now become hermeneutic. If one mark of modernism is that it reveals the fragmentary, these novels sneakily inaugurate modernism in English.

Yet how good are they as novels? If it was difficult for the James cult of the 1950s to find fault with the Master, contemporary scholars are simply not interested in value judgment at all (they have smaller fish to fry), and the two sides are therefore oddly allied in obscuring a proper adjudication. The old side winces to judge; the new side winces at those who do judge—and the field is left open to those complainers who simply find all of late James “unreadable” or “not worth the effort.”

Of the novels collected here, only *What Maisie Knew* seems a really great book. *The Other House* is an unworthy melodrama; James himself somewhat disdained it. It has an un-

characteristic cruelty about it—quite the opposite atmosphere of the other three books, which represent tender arguments in defense of innocence. *The Awkward Age* offers a powerful satire on the callousness of London society, and has at its center a striking creation, the beautiful, striving, terrible Mrs. Brookenham. But it lacks the relentless precision of *What Maisie Knew*. *The Spoils of Poynton*, a work of real penetration, is marred, I think, by an inadequate sense of the motivations of its heroine, Fleda Vetch. Fleda, a young woman of considerable insight and intellect, is the new friend of Mrs. Gereth, the owner of Poynton. James got the idea for this novel—what he habitually called the *donnée*—at a dinner party; he dined out frequently and used these evenings to truffle for rich stories. His neighbor at the table had told

Owen and Mona have not yet agreed on a date for the wedding, and assumes that something is amiss with this detestable union. She sees that Fleda is attracted to her son, and soon hears that Owen returns the attraction. She decides to use Fleda as a wedge between Owen and Mona, so that he might eventually marry the malleable Fleda. The spoils would then be in safe hands once again.

But goodness always works dialectically in James, forcing ironic reversals. Fleda is very bright and very good; precisely because she comes to Owen, and Owen to her, she feels she must resist Mrs. Gereth's machinations. Fleda declares that she will accept Owen only if Mona releases him from his bond. She has a hunch—a moral hunch—that Owen does not love her as freely as he says he does, that he is making a fuss over her in

James's characters become Chief Justices of the word, forever raising to moral scrutiny certain anointed terms and phrases. This is what gives late James its strongly philosophical flavor.

him about a "small and ugly matter" in which a Scottish widow was suing her son over the fine furniture he had inherited, which she would not let him have. Mrs. Gereth, like the Scottish widow, has become embroiled in a struggle with her son, Owen, who is about to marry the vulgar, nouveau riche Mona Brigstock. Under English law, once Owen marries, he and his wife will become master and mistress of Poynton.

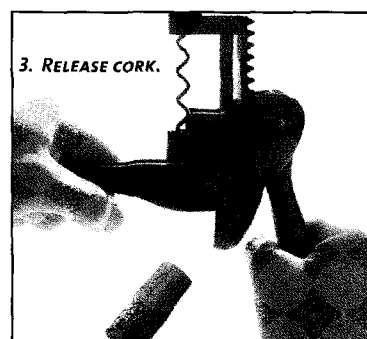
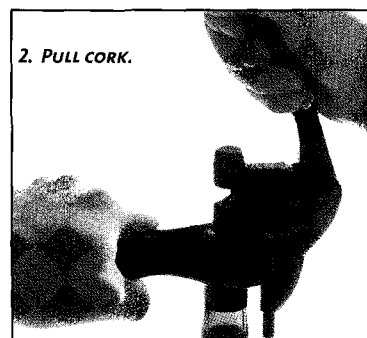
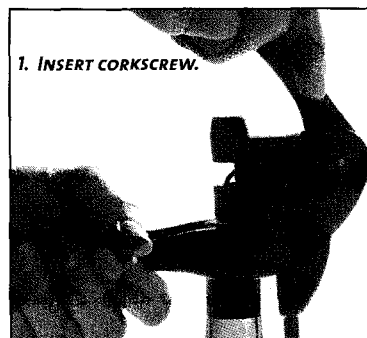
In general, James's characters divide into gentle but weak men; formidable and finally monstrous manipulators (mostly women, but sometimes men); and those whose innocence needs to be protected (sometimes young women, sometimes young men, sometimes children). Mrs. Gereth is one of the manipulators, like Madame Merle in *The Portrait of a Lady* and Aunt Maud in *The Wings of the Dove*. She cannot bear the idea of the brash Mona in charge of her beautiful *objets*, and determines to act. Her weapon—at first unwitting, and then unwilling—will be young Fleda, whom she takes under her wing. Mrs. Gereth becomes excited when she hears that

part because of the pressure from his mother. And indeed, given a free choice, Owen, a weak, bumbling, honorable fellow, does return to Mona, and Fleda, once so near to what she desires (she truly adores Owen), loses it forever.

The Spoils of Poynton, *What Maisie Knew*, and *The Awkward Age* all close with acts of apparent renunciation, in which the heroines reject happiness in favor of good. In *What Maisie Knew* this gesture has a truly paradoxical power. We feel that Maisie's innocence is very much worth defending, and has already been so badly damaged that any bargain that might salvage it—even at the cost of her obvious and immediate happiness—is worth accepting. But Fleda is a contradictory moral presence. She is supposed to be clever, sensitive, the proper point of view of the novel. Yet she is in thrall to wickedness. Though James is critical of Mrs. Gereth's materialism (her treasures are, after all, called *spoils*), in the end he and the novel seem too ready to agree with Mrs. Gereth's sense that the spoils merit the commotion that ensued. The highly

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moral Fleda consistently—like the novel itself—conflates mere acquisitiveness (Mrs. Gereth's good taste) with virtuous behavior. She reflects that "To have created such a place was to have had dignity enough; when there was a question of defending it the fiercest attitude was the right one." And later: "[Owning the spoils] was not the crude love of possession; it was the need to be faithful to a trust and loyal to an idea. The idea was surely noble."

One view might be that James wants us to see Fleda as somewhat naive, duped by her very virtuousness into becoming the agent of stealthy wickedness. But this is hard to square with the powerful intelligence and tact that Fleda otherwise shows in her analysis of the situation. And if James is perhaps inviting us to judge, even to disapprove

the merit of that generosity if I mention that it could take the flight we are considering just because really, with the telescope of her long thought, Fleda saw what might bring her out of the wood"), and the speedy and compact *What Maisie Knew* in fact has very few.

What Maisie Knew is both deeply affecting and technically remarkable, a novel whose plot races ahead like a drawing-room comedy's but leaves a wake of grief wherever it goes. Like *The Awkward Age*, it is a scathing swipe at London high society, here figured in the dreadful husband and wife—now divorced—Beale and Ida Farange. The novel (also powered by a dinner-party *donnée*) opens with the couple's divorce and their decision, enforced by the court, to share custody of their daughter. Young Maisie (who is seven or eight) must spend six

***What Maisie Knew* is both deeply affecting and technically remarkable, a novel whose plot races ahead like a drawing-room comedy's but leaves a wake of grief wherever it goes.**

of, Fleda's final renunciation (I doubt it, but the notion is worth entertaining), then it is still hard to read it as tragic, given our dim view of her earlier surrender to Mrs. Gereth. Many of James's heroes and heroines almost destroy themselves in their strenuous efforts at moral self-cleansing. But we feel that Fleda should have been bright enough, and good enough, to resist getting so dirty in the first place.

Early in 1896 James complained of pain in his right (writing) wrist, and in February of the next year he hired a stenographer, William MacAlpine. A lot has been said about the connection between James's dictation to MacAlpine at the typewriter and his famous late sentences—those beautiful, maddening, loaded convos. Leon Edel wrote that James's friends swore they could identify the very chapter in *What Maisie Knew* that marked his new method of writing. But *The Spoils of Poynton*, written before MacAlpine's arrival, has its share of fairly appalling sentences ("I may not perhaps too much diminish

months a year at each parent's London house, back and forth. The arrangement is complicated by the parents' loathing of each other and by the moral irregularity of their households; Beale and Ida pile up lovers like dirty dishes.

James tells the story in what seems like conventional third-person narration but is really a way of seeing everything through Maisie's wide eyes. The effort to be faithful to a young girl's vision prompts James to create extraordinary and wonderful effects. Each parent's household is seen as if on the canvas of a German Expressionist. Her father's house is a blurred picture of men with cigarettes and bared teeth, who are forever pinching and patting Maisie: "Her features had somehow become prominent; they were so perpetually nipped by the gentlemen who came to see her father and the smoke of whose cigarettes went into her face." Her mother's is characterized by endless "shrieks" from Ida's friends, and by secrecy: "Everything had something behind it: life was like a long, long corridor with rows of closed doors."

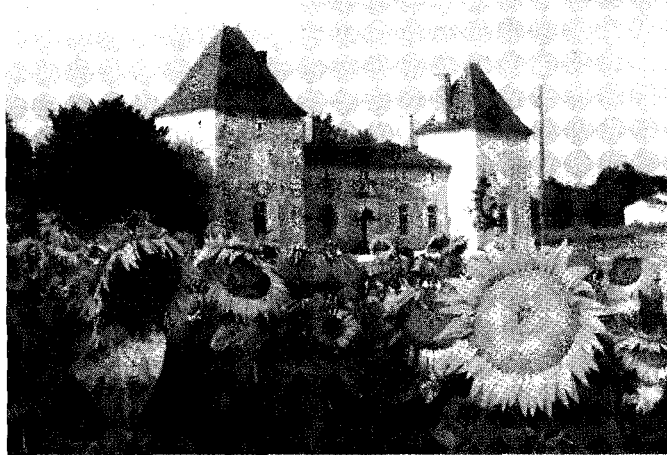
Maisie's life becomes even harder when her father and mother both remarry. Ida marries the gentle and wise Sir Claude; Beale marries Maisie's glamorous governess, Miss Overmore. Maisie is fond of both of these new additions. But relationships last no longer than a chapter or two in this novel, and before long Sir Claude and Miss Overmore have left their respective spouses and have fallen in love with each other. Throughout the novel adults use Maisie for their own purposes, even while congratulating themselves on not doing just that. Sir Claude and Miss Overmore promise to look after Maisie as neither her mother nor her father can. But Maisie rightly suspects (like Fleda, she has a moral hunch) that Sir Claude and his lover really care more for each other than they do for her.

Maisie, abandoned by her parents, finally has to choose between this handsome and apparently loving couple and the dowdy, self-righteous Mrs. Wix, her new governess, who strongly disapproves of the liaison between Sir Claude and Miss Overmore (they are not yet married), and who longs to take Maisie away from the moral dishevelment she has witnessed. Very subtly, James makes Mrs. Wix noble but unlikeable. She is lower-class, dresses poorly, and knows very little, yet she is the only character in the novel who loves Maisie as a *mother* would—and that is because she lost her own little daughter, Clara Matilda, in a road accident years earlier. Maisie feels that Mrs. Wix is safe, “as safe as Clara Matilda, who was in heaven and yet, embarrassingly, also in Kensal Green, where they had been together to see her little huddled grave.”

That last sentence is a perfect example of James's mastery of technique. What appears to be third-person storytelling is in fact much closer to first-person narration, so saturated is it with Maisie's language and vision. “Embarrassingly.” Whose adverb is that? It is the word Maisie would have used to herself, dragged by poor Mrs. Wix to visit her daughter's grave. The technical term for this kind of thing, in which the author inflects third-person narration with the language of a particular character, is “free indirect style,” and James uses it systematically and devastatingly through-

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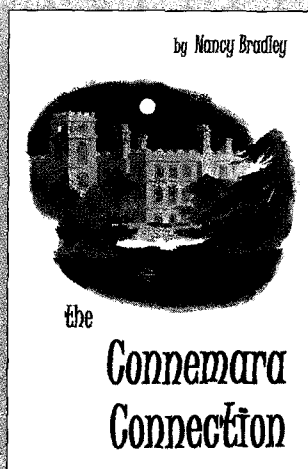
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out this novel, to keep close to Maisie's knowledge and Maisie's sensibility. (James's greatness as a controller of free indirect style links him with Jane Austen, and makes all the odder his apparent dislike of Austen's work.)

Nothing is more powerful in this novel than the moment when Maisie, out walking one day with Sir Claude, sees her mother in the park with a strange man, clearly a new lover, identified only as the Captain. As Sir Claude and Ida talk, the Captain eventually leads Maisie to a couple of chairs under a tree. He assures her that it is not as bad as it looks, that her mother has had a hard life, that above all she is "true." Maisie is deeply moved, and seizes on this word. Tears fill her eyes, and she says to the Captain, "Oh, do you love her?" The Captain assures her stiffly that he does.

It was an almost incredible balm—it soothed so her impression of danger and pain. She sank back in her chair; she covered her face with her hands. "Oh, mother, mother, mother!" she sobbed ... "Say you love her, Mr. Captain; say it, say it!" she implored.

The Captain again assures her that he loves her mother. "Then don't do it only for just a little," begs this extraordinary and damaged child. A moment later she has returned to Sir Claude's side and is cheerfully denying that anything much took place between her and the Captain. Maisie knows what she knows—and in a world of secrets, she knows how to keep her own. When she chooses to spend the rest of her childhood with Mrs. Wix, the reader rejoices.

This Library of America selection, impeccably edited by Myra Jehlen, presents just the texts themselves, with a minimum of notes and no introduction. The enterprise, like Henry James's charge into the West End, seems quixotic; it suggests a faith in the interests, not to mention the capacities, of the common reader that may turn out to be sweetly superstitious. We shall see. Still, it is welcome, and adds permanence to permanence, enshrining these now canonical works in this now canonical library. ■

James Wood is a senior editor at The New Republic and the author of the forthcoming novel *The Book Against God*.

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PLOTLESS WONDER

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Anita Brookner has purged her novels of nearly all incident, creating a kind of anti-plot (the story line of *Making Things Better* is almost willfully inert), and yet her fiercely observant prose radiates dramatic energy. For the first 243 of these 275 pages nothing much happens to Julius Herz, an elderly, dutiful Londoner who questions his right to the most basic improvements in his life, such as moving to a new flat. "Home was such an emotive concept that he doubted whether he would be able to live up to it, to make a place for himself in a world where people exercised choices," Herz's circumscribed existence consists of nursing a ridiculous crush on an entirely indifferent young neighbor and reminiscing about his anxious, uneventful childhood. Only during the last thirty pages do his idle ruminations translate into decisive, unexpected action. Surprised by this turn, I recalled that long before publishing her first book of fiction, in her early fifties, Brookner had an entirely different career, as an authority on eighteenth-century painting—proof that it's possible to reinvent oneself at any time.



MAKING THINGS BETTER

by Anita Brookner
Random House

The secret animating Brookner's outwardly sensible protagonists is that they're hopelessly smitten with the charming, complacent, and largely oblivious relatives and acquaintances to whom they feel, often justifiably, superior. Her novels are ambivalent love songs to the world's victors, the kind of people who "appeared always on the verge of giving a party." One Brookner heroine "followed a girl in the street simply because she looked so lucky that I could not tear myself away from her." Herz also loves unwisely, finding the "utter selfishness" of his pampered cousin Fanny irresistible. Usually compared to Austen or James, Brookner, a more mild-mannered chronicler of displaced ambition and unrequited desire,

is really Britain's answer to Chekhov. Herz's ardor for Fanny is akin to Vanya's restless passion for the tantalizing Yelena, just fussier and on a smaller scale.

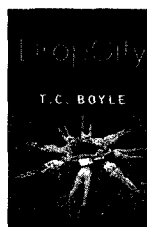
Brookner's early novels, including the Booker Prize-winning *Hotel du Lac*, are frothy and girlishly confessional, but the tone of her fiction has darkened. For those who, like me, prefer the fizzier Brookner, *Making Things Better* offers plenty of compensations. Always an elegant stylist, she has grown steadily more refined in her writing; she artfully captures ideas that change in the course of a single, unhurried sentence. Her vocabulary, too, has evolved, metamorphosing into something frumpish and exacting, even inbred, and the fastidiousness suits her hermetic world. Herz's childhood apartment is "subfusc and dim," his great fear "inanition." *Making Things Better* is too lengthy (the middle drags), but the final pages gallop along as Herz finally claims a modicum of happiness for himself. —ELIZABETH JUDD

LIFE BELOW ZERO

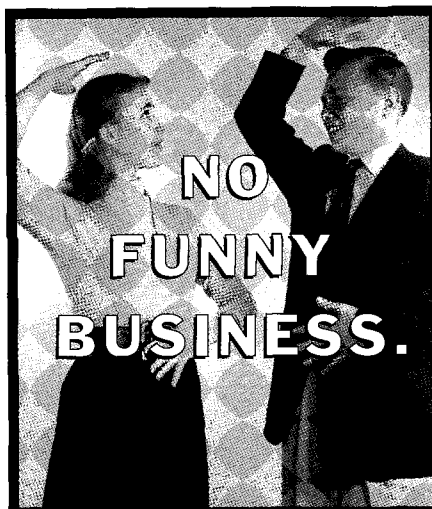
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Boyle's ambitious but unsatisfying Ninth novel takes place in 1970, when a band of California communards pile into a converted school bus and light out for Alaska before the local law and their own short attention spans can catch up with them. As utopians go, they're a pretty derivative bunch, borrowing their name—Drop City—from a more famous commune in Colorado, and self-consciously invoking Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters as they hit the highway. Half of Boyle's snidely amusing joke is that for all their thirst after the authentic, these junk-food-eating, fossil-fuel-burning hippies have all the authenticity of a Monkees lunch box. The other half is that when Boyle's flower children finally find their Alaskan promised land, somebody's already living on it: a sweet, resourceful trapper named Sess Harder and his devoted new bride, Pamela.

Anybody who takes Boyle for a mis-



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anthrope—and it's a popular reading of his work by now, encouraged by the author's black humor and fondness for apocalyptic scenarios—owes himself a night by the fire with Sess and Pamela. Boyle recounts their courtship and marriage with a romantic playfulness that's altogether charming. Since his earliest stories he's had a knack for describing arcane, sometimes imaginary subcultures in memorable detail, and Sess's indoctrination of Pamela into the beautiful minutiae of life below zero plays to his strengths. Did you know that bush planes go unpainted "because paint [adds] an unnecessary thirteen pounds to the total load"? Me neither—but it's the kind of irresistible insider's lore that keeps a story fresh and convincing.

The collision between *Drop City's* callow layabouts, who daydream of living off the fat of the land, and the Harders, who love the land but will be damned if they see much fat on it, touches off the crisis of the novel—or it should. But here's where Boyle goes wrong and, worse, soft. As most of the communards fritter away their provisions and descend into factional bickering, Sess and Pamela befriend a few of the less immature ones. Before we know it, all the sympathetic, well-rounded characters are palling around in one cabin, and all the selfish, underdeveloped ones are stuck downriver, too busy trading recriminations to pose much of a threat. It's a stacked deck. What shaped up as a promising if schematic showdown between selfishness and self-reliance dissipates into a wan retelling of "The Ant and the Grasshopper." Boyle's resourceful heroes have a better time of it come winter, as we knew they would, but the improvident "grasshoppers" prove too pathetic as antagonists to justify the contest. Boyle has to pile all kinds of symbolic freight on an implausibly evil bush pilot just to work up some climactic jeopardy, and the story's brittle frame can't take the weight. If a bush plane can't keep even a few pounds of paint aloft, a cargo of man's inhumanity to man will bring it down for sure.

When the story falters, Boyle's stylistic tics become more noticeable. He has always been a conversational writer, with an effortless, incantatory prose

that throws off jokes without ever seeming to depend on them. But in *Drop City* violence increasingly manages to infiltrate even the most innocuous of images. We hear of "hills immovable and silent, transfixed on the spearheads of the trees." We see "the stars scattered ... like pustules on a broken-out face." "Whole armadas of ice," we're given to understand, "had come down to do war with the open water." And finally, "snow cracked under his boots like gunfire." Like gunfire? Really? Or is it merely the whipcrack of a good writer, mashing a mutinous novel toward the finish line, taking out his frustration on the scenery? —DAVID KIPEN

NO EXIT

.....

"Horri-fying" may be too mild a word for this true story of Puerto Rican teenagers growing up amid poverty, drug addiction, violence, and sexual abuse in the Bronx. At its center are Jessica, a seductive sixteen-year-old in 1985, when the book opens; her younger brother, Cesar, by age twelve already "busy sprinting around the warm-up track of a criminal life"; and Coco, Cesar's lover since they were both fourteen and the mother of two of his children. Jessica's Cinderella romance with Boy George, a free-spending heroin dealer whose business grosses more than \$500,000 a week, wins her a seven-year prison term on drug charges. Soon thereafter Cesar begins serving nine years to life for manslaughter. Boy George is sentenced at the age of twenty-three to life without parole. Coco is left struggling to raise her five children, to relate to their four fathers, and to negotiate with schools and social-service agencies. *Random Family* is primarily a story of parenting—or simply procreating—in a world where children, however neglected, may be a status symbol or a means of one-upping a man's other girlfriends.

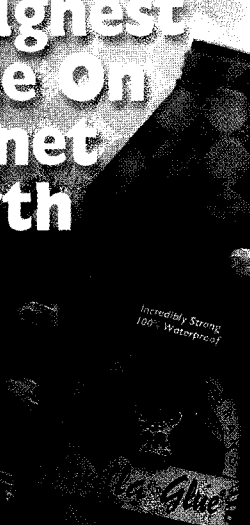
Adrian LeBlanc, having been a near



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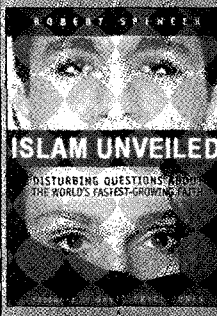


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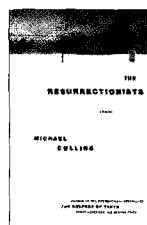
constant eyewitness to these lives, reports crises and daily life alike with journalistic dispassion and a sometimes daunting thoroughness. Readers, however, may come to feel that the horrors of her story lie as much in the choices these young people make as in their circumstances. And because LeBlanc writes with the pacing of a novelist, they may occasionally be lulled into expecting a happy—if temporary—turn of events. Forget it. —*MARTHA SPAULDING*

TRUMPED-UP TRAVAILS

.....

Michael Collins, the author of *The Keepers of Truth* (shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2000), returns to depressed midwestern America in his latest novel, an encyclopedia of familial despair, suffering, and cruelty loosely organized into the semblance of a plot. Into barely 300 pages Collins packs thievery, arson, polio, grave-robbing, murder, a coma, cancer, death row, insanity, child abuse (several varieties), alcoholism, trampled mice, and falling space junk. As in *The Keepers of Truth*, these plot complications are mainly window-dressing for the hero's gloomy, overwrought meditations on the darkness at the heart of the American dream. Here is the hero, Frank, contemplating his graduation day: "Our blood-lust survives our education, despite our attempts at civilization. We are not so far removed from our forebears, from the fur trappers who first wandered into this wilderness we call America." One wishes this were sly parody, but humor is not Collins's strong suit.

The tale of family dysfunction as a metaphor for the dark id of American culture has a long and perhaps overrich history in American literature, from *The Scarlet Letter* to the wealth of cathartic novels and memoirs churned out today. If handled with ingenuity and subtlety, this theme could remain fresh. Unfortunately, Collins betrays the limits of his imagination when he resorts to quoting



THE RESURRECTIONISTS
by Michael Collins
Scribner

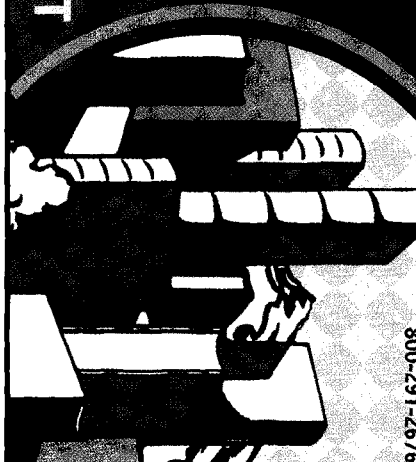
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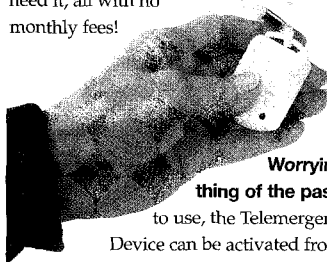
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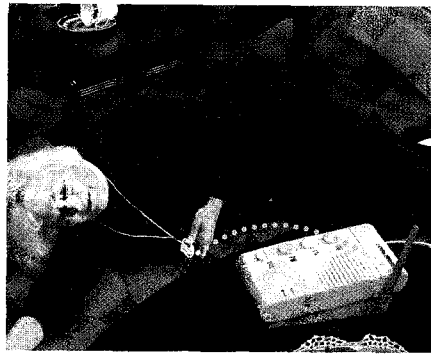
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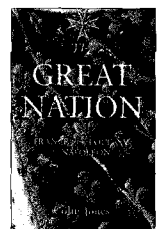
popular television shows of the 1970s to create a sense of time and context; easy-bake cultural references of this sort are rapidly going stale. But Collins has a message to deliver, and such obvious devices serve his purpose all the more.

It's a shame, because he is undeniably a gifted writer, with an ear for certain registers of speech and a nose for the telling detail. Many have described his prose as "vivid," which is true if vague. His writing is naturally concrete; he eschews words like "vivid" in favor of relaying what he sees: "A neon cherry flashed on a martini glass that tipped back and forth on the sign outside a bar called the Well. *Happy Hour All Night Long* is what it said on the door, but nobody looked happy inside." One keeps turning pages, savoring pithy moments like this, long after wearying of the mouthpiece characters and their trumped-up travails. If Collins devoted less time to sermonizing and more attention to the mechanics of storytelling, he could produce something approaching the grandeur to which he aspires. —SCOTT PRATER

VIVE LA FRANCE

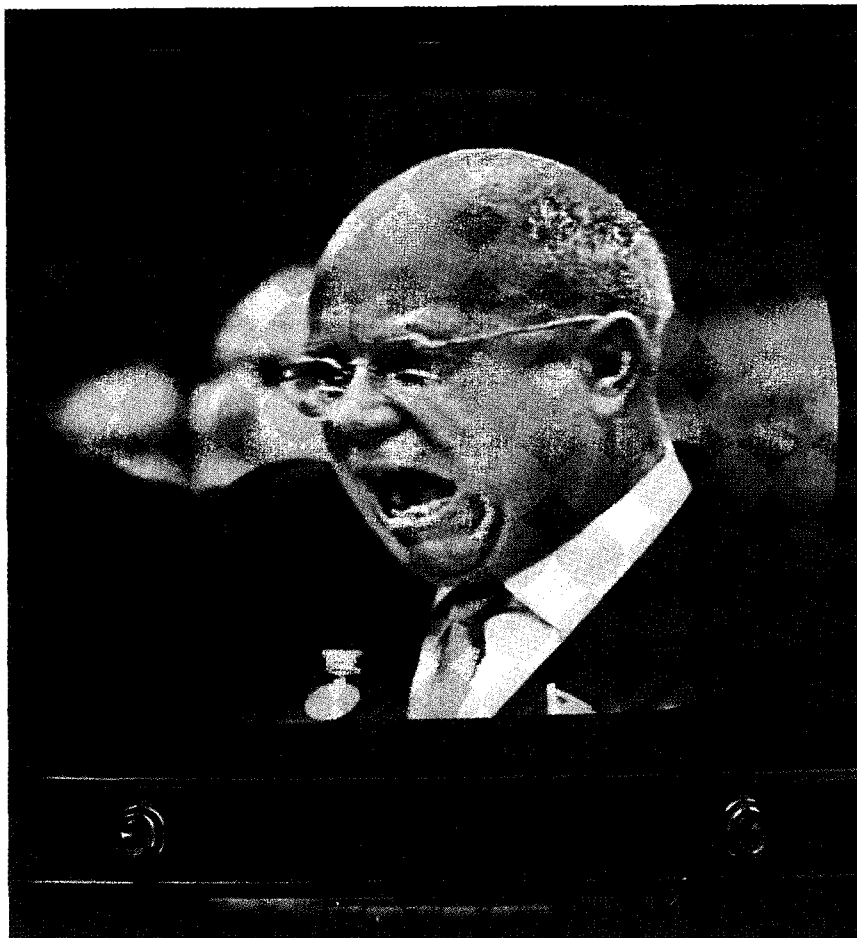
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THE GREAT NATION

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BOOKS

GAUDY BUTTERFLY IN A DRAB CHRYSALIS

William Taubman's new biography of Khrushchev is compelling as a character study but not fully satisfying as a history

BY PERRY ANDERSON

.....

Traveling in Egypt a few months before his fall, Nikita Khrushchev more than once proudly described himself as "still a peasant." So his official cicerone on the trip, Gamal Abdel Nasser's confidante Mohamed Heikal, who had accompanied him on the boat trip from the Crimea to Alexandria, was taken aback when Khrushchev complained that Heikal had described him as such in a newspaper article. How could he object? "But you wrote that I was like a peasant from a story by Dostoyevsky—why didn't you say peasant from Tolstoy?" came the indignant reply. William Taubman's gigantic new biography of the ruler who succeeded

Stalin shows how happily Heikal chose his reference—which, contrary to Khrushchev's impression, was entirely to the Russian's credit. It is doubtful whether any human being ever resembled Tolstoy's wise simpletons in their insipid schmaltz; certainly no one less so than Khrushchev. There was, however, much that was Dostoyevskyan in this strange bucolic, in whom so much bluster and self-abasement, cunning and naiveté, impulsiveness and calculation (not to speak of crime and expiation), were inextricably intertwined.

The great achievement of Taubman's book is to offer a psychological portrait of Khrushchev, at once highly

critical and deeply sympathetic, that captures this mixture. No other work has brought home so vividly just how extraordinary a figure Khrushchev was in the gallery of modern rulers. His famously uncontrolled harangues—condemning Stalin's crimes in the "secret speech," denouncing the U-2 in Paris, hammering his shoe on the table at the United Nations, bawling out artists at the Manezh exhibition—would be unthinkable today. Although he was sensitive to slights, no twentieth-century politician was more careless of "image" (meaning a manufactured and spurious presentability); and for just that reason few have left images more enduring in the public memory. By comparison, John F. Kennedy was, in more than one sense, virtually as doctored as Leonid Brezhnev. Taubman traces Khrushchev's blend of energy, ebullience, and rueful awareness of his own character limitations to the tensions in his peasant family and the opportunities of his working-class youth, during a period of dramatic industrial growth and social upheaval. We follow his rise through the CPSU in Ukraine to his installation as a precocious Party secretary in Moscow in early 1934; his part in the construction of the Metro; his return in 1938 to Ukraine, where he remained as regional boss for twelve years; his function as political commissar at the front in the war; his return to Stalin's side in Moscow in 1949; his decisive role in dispatching the secret-police chief Lavrenti Beria after Stalin's death, in 1953; his consolidation of supreme power in 1957; the seven tumultuous years of his personal rule of the USSR, till 1964; and the silence and solitude of his disgrace, while he recorded his life—if somewhat more self-critically—in the spirit of Napoleon on Saint Helena.

All this is told grippingly, with consistently good judgment and a feeling for telling detail. We are given a portrait of rare penetration. Perhaps the only significant enigma Taubman leaves underexplored is how Khrushchev's irrepressible tendency to say what he thought or felt after Stalin's death could have been contained so long while the tyrant lived, when the slightest slip—with a tongue later so loose and so sharp

KHRUSHCHEV: THE MAN AND HIS ERA
by William Taubman
W. W. Norton

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—might have cost Khrushchev his life. How could such a flamboyant, colorful figure have burst from the grayest of bureaucracies? Absolute power is, of course, one answer to the puzzle. Once Khrushchev was at the top in the Soviet system, there seemed little to restrain him save his own misgivings or conscience. Age, too, must have played a role. Taubman gives little sense of how old his subject is at any given time (this is a surprisingly common fault in biographers). But Khrushchev was in his sixties when he became the ruler of the USSR, a season in which it is not unknown for long-standing inhibitions to fall away as mortality draws near. Still, there remains some irreducible mystery in the emergence of this gaudy butterfly from the drabdest chrysalis. It is no fault of Taubman's that he seems stumped by it.

Subtitled a biography "The Man and His Era," however, raises expectations that Taubman fails to meet. Explaining that he set out to study Khrushchev's U.S. policy and then became more interested in his personality than his diplomacy, Taubman writes, "Even as I broadened my focus to give equal time to all periods of his life, I narrowed it so as to concentrate on his character." That narrowing has its costs, because what it more or less inevitably scants is context. In part research restrictions are to blame. Taubman has made good use of the abundant, if highly selective, official reports and transcripts and participant recollections that have been published in Russia over the past decade. But he has not enjoyed much direct access to the archives. He was forced to rely heavily on interviews and worked in close collaboration with Khrushchev's family; the shape of his book is thus determined in considerable measure by these sources. The risks of such an approach can be seen from the fact that not merely Khrushchev's son Sergei, now an American citizen, has been tireless in defending his father's reputation: the offspring of his defeated rivals Beria and Georgi Malenkov, and of his erstwhile colleague Anastas Mikoyan, have also sprung into print on behalf of their families. The disputes between these clans can really be re-

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solved only by documentary evidence that is still lacking.

But there is a further reason why Taubman's book, for all its merits as a biography, is skewed as a history. That lies in its starting point, as Taubman candidly describes it. The original concern with Khrushchev's U.S. policies has been submerged but not suppressed by the subsequent turn toward his "life and times," with two main consequences.

First, domestic Soviet politics, other than set-piece clashes in the Politburo, are on the whole treated thinly. Here the lack of context has a significant bearing on the depiction of character. Taubman tends to accept too much at face value Khrushchev's self-description as someone whose forte was getting things done and mixing with ordinary people, who couldn't stand the mere paper pushing at which his deskbound rivals were adept. We are given little or no sense of the skillful bureaucratic patronage and maneuvering that took him to the top. This ranged from a probable behind-the-scenes role in the Doctor's Plot phase of Stalin's final paranoia (when Khrushchev's close associates Mikhail Suslov and Frol Kozlov took the lead in a "vigilance campaign" tacitly targeting Beria) to the brick-by-brick building of a loyal clientele among *oblast* secretaries, which secured him victory in the Central Committee over the "anti-party group" of Malenkov, Vyacheslav Molotov, and Lazar Kaganovich in the summer of 1957. It was when Khrushchev ceased to exercise his skill, isolating himself from Party functionaries in a small, nepotistic circle of mediocre advisers, that he brought about his own downfall. Mikhail Gorbachev, a smaller figure, made the same mistake a quarter of a century later, and paid the same price. To read a life of Khrushchev that passes over this side of his career is a bit like viewing Lyndon Johnson without benefit of Robert Caro.

Second, we are not granted much overview of the pace of change beyond the somewhat besieged fortress of the CPSU itself—the problems and pressures within Soviet society at large, which set the parameters for decision-

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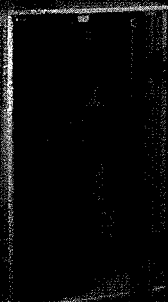
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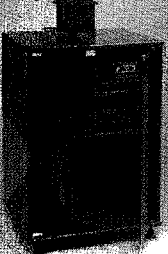
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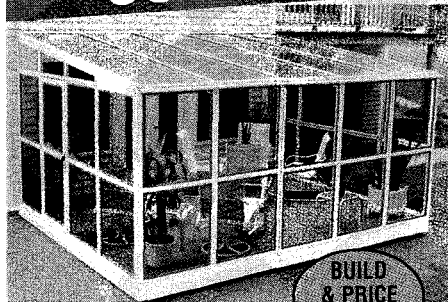
making in the Kremlin after Stalin's death. Though Taubman records the failure of Khrushchev's various agricultural schemes, he scarcely hints at the fortunes of the economy as a whole (this was still a period of substantial growth and of technological advance in space and military programs), and he registers the intellectual ferment of these years only in passing. How the country was actually governed remains curiously sketchy in the absence of any concrete account of the way in which Khrushchev allocated his time or spent his days as its Premier. So, too, the complex reckoning of what his rule meant to the mass of ordinary Soviet citizens—what they gained, what they kept, what they lost—is never truly attempted. The weight of Taubman's interests lies elsewhere—in Khrushchev's relations with the world outside his country.

Here, too, an appropriate balance is wanting. From the beginning Stalin's heirs faced three main problems: how to preserve control of Eastern Europe; how to restore or maintain the unity of the world Communist movement, which turned above all on relations with China; and how to achieve a strategic equilibrium with the United States. The combination of Taubman's original interest in Khrushchev's U.S. policy and his eventual focus on Khrushchev's personality means that these problems are never kept even remotely in proportion. Ten pages are devoted to the fortunes of Khrushchev's family during the war, a mere five to the Hungarian Revolution, twenty to his inconsequential trip in 1959 to the United States, a couple to the decisive journey to China that followed it. In all, relations with America get about eight times as much coverage as those with Eastern Europe, and ten times as much as those with China. Entertaining trivia about Marilyn Monroe and Frank Sinatra are given pride of place, at the expense of any coherent account of Sino-Soviet conflict.

It is true, of course, that for Khrushchev himself, U.S.-Soviet relations loomed increasingly large as his reign wore on. Initially this was a function of his need to stabilize East Germany, which, after futile histrionics on all sides, was for a time achieved by

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simple recourse to building the Berlin Wall. Subsequently, as the Kennedy Administration developed a first-strike strategy and a nuclear superiority capable of delivering it, Khrushchev sought to parry the U.S. advantage by installing short-range Soviet warheads in Cuba. Taubman devotes the longest single chapter in his book to the ensuing standoff in the Caribbean. Yet for all the ink that has been spilled on it, this is an overrated episode. Moscow had no chance of running up a nuclear foresail without detection, and even had it done so, little would have changed: U.S. strategic predominance would have remained what it was—at least until Soviet ICBMs arrived in sufficient numbers a few years later. Khrushchev could comfort himself that even if the withdrawal of the Soviet warheads had given Kennedy a symbolic victory, the Soviets had gained a matching withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey and a tacit U.S. guarantee not to invade Cuba. But these gestures were largely symbolic too, since they simply formalized what Washington was considering anyway. By 1964, when Khrushchev fell, the underlying balance of U.S.-Soviet relations was much as it had been the previous decade, when he came to power.

On the other hand, Sino-Soviet relations had been utterly and permanently transformed. The real drama of Khrushchev's foreign policy lay in the East, not the West. There his impulsiveness—first delivering generous aid, far beyond what his colleagues wanted or he had budgeted, even promising a transfer of a nuclear bomb; then swinging to the opposite extreme, suddenly withdrawing all Soviet technicians and canceling works in progress—had momentous consequences. For it led to a break between Eurasia's two largest states, one that continues to shape world politics to this day. This huge development is still poorly researched and understood. But if we can speak of a Khrushchev era, it is the attack on Stalin and the conflict with Mao—not backchat with Eisenhower or shadow-boxing with Kennedy—that define it. ▀

Perry Anderson teaches history at the University of California at Los Angeles and is the editor of New Left Review.

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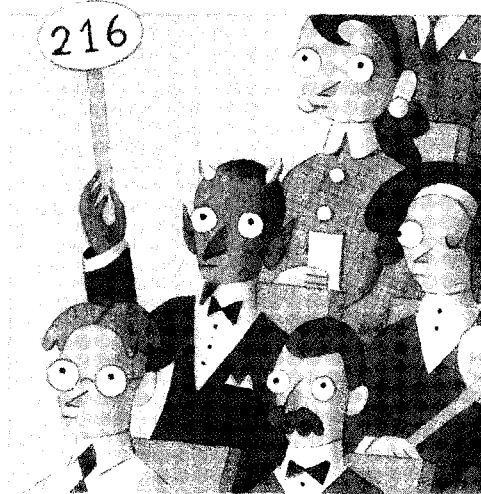
The intersection of religion and whatever “modernity” happens to be at any given moment takes unpredictable forms—an example of that blend of parasitism and symbiosis known as co-evolution. Sometimes modernity and religion take eons to come to terms with each other (and, of course, often they never do). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts only recently cleared five of the victims of the Salem witch trials, which were held in 1692. It took a great investment of Talmudic energy to adapt telephones, elevators, and other devices to the demands of sabbath observance. Catholic theologians have come to terms with the reality of sex-change operations, though they recently decided that the sex of the soul remains unaltered. (This finding is presumably designed to prevent a rash of surgical transformations by women who want to be priests.)

On occasion, however, a *modus vivendi* is worked out in a natural and satisfying way. One magazine I look at, *Islamic Horizons*, which is the equivalent of *Christianity Today* for American Muslims, advertises credit cards with the sales pitch that the Muslim tithe, the *zakat*, will be added automatically to the billing statement. Other ads offer Global Positioning Systems that can fix the direction of Mecca from anyplace in the world.

Notions of family life have been updated across the board. Divorce is now accepted in all the world’s great religions, though until lately it was not affirmed by any of them as a benchmark in spiritual growth. But with divorce becoming more and more common, various denomina-

tions have devised appropriate blessing ceremonies. Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians all offer dissolution services. Reform Judaism has added a “ritual of release” to its repertoire.

The relationship between Americans and their cars is likewise receiving significant religious attention—embod-



ied in the question “What Would Jesus Drive?” Were he alive today, would he join Arianna Huffington and condemn the environmentally odious sport-utility vehicle (which also happens to be the favored conveyance, according to intelligence reports, of the Taliban’s Mullah Mohammed Omar)? Would he drive a Toyota Prius hybrid? Would he simply walk—or ride a donkey? An open letter to automakers from an interfaith coalition has called for “a new conversation about cars and their impact on God’s children and God’s creation.”

As the nation prepared for war, the clergy who minister to the armed forces

on distant deployments could avail themselves of fully modernized equipment. The U.S. Army’s new containerized chapel ships in a standard module measuring 8' x 20' x 8'; it holds everything needed for a Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim service. Portability has been an essential element in the success of many religions. The Israelites could carry the Ark of the Covenant into battle. Muslims carried the Koran from the Arabian peninsula across Africa and up beyond the Pyrenees in less than a century. Traveling preachers still hold revival meetings under canvas all over America.

(In contrast the Druids, rooted to their sacred oaks, never became a *jihad*-loving people.) The Army has plans to build and pack forty-four containerized chapels, each one including a tent and a lectern; an electronic keyboard; copies of the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon; prayer mats and prayer shawls (in camouflage green); and offering plates.

Like the empire of Rome, the American empire carries all its acquired gods into battle at once. Edward Gibbon observed, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that “Rome, the capital of a great monarchy, was incessantly filled with subjects and strangers from every part of the world, who all introduced and enjoyed the favorite superstitions of their native country.” He went on, “Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind.” The containerized chapel is, in its way, a movable version of the Pantheon.

One technology that virtually all religious groups have embraced is the Internet. For Jews who cannot personally visit Jerusalem, prayers can be

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sent by e-mail, to be printed out and left in cracks in the Western Wall; Christian pilgrimage sites offer similar e-mail services. A source of guidance for multitudes has been "Belief-O-Matic," a feature on the Web site beliefnet.com that leads the searcher through twenty skillfully crafted questions ("What happens to humans after death?"; "Why is there so much suffering in the world?") in order to reveal "what religion (if any) you practice ... or ought to consider practicing." Catholics in Italy are conducting an electronic plebiscite on who should be the patron saint of the Internet—Isidore of Seville, who produced an encyclopedia? Clare of Assisi, who saw visions on a wall?—and hope to have a recommendation by Easter. Although the Catholic Church suppressed a recent attempt to conduct the Sacrament of Penance by e-mail, there is a secular Apology Room on the Web that encourages visitors to "anonymously share with others" their shortcomings, and to beg forgiveness. *The Boston Globe* has declared the United States to be in the midst of a "forgiveness boom," though I hope it never extends to *Rocky V* or the new Comiskey Park.

One way in which the Internet is beginning to make a significant practical difference involves the selling of souls. This is not, of course, a new phenomenon; people have been selling their souls since souls were invented. A vast body of literature addresses the subject. In Christopher Marlowe's play *The Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus* the doctor agrees to remit his soul to Lucifer in return for all the knowledge in the world. Of course, Faustus eventually comes to regret the transaction. During the 1988 presidential campaign Mario Cuomo was said to have been offered the Oval Office in exchange for his immortal soul, and to have replied, "What's the catch?"

The selling of souls has now made its way onto eBay, the online auction house, providing a literal answer to the rhetorical question from the Gospel of Mark: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The online traffic in souls became public two years ago when a man named Adam Burtle, of Woodinville,

Washington, put up an eBay listing that read "20 yr-old Seattle boy's SOUL, hardly used." Burtle went on, "Please realize, I make no warranties as to the condition of the soul. As of now, it is near mint condition, with only minor scratches." By the time eBay officials stepped in (eBay insists that auctioned items consist of merchandise that can physically change hands), the price had reached \$400, and Burtle's soul had been bought by a woman in the Midwest.

A year later a twenty-four-year-old man in West Des Moines named Nathan Wright put his soul up for bid, first on eBay and then, after the watchdogs discovered it, on Yahoo. It went to a television sound mixer in Los Angeles for \$31 plus \$15 for shipping and handling. (Wright had put it in a jar.) Wright reports on his Web site: "My soul's new owner has vowed to take good care of it. He and his wife are planning a trip to Europe and apparently the soul will be accompanying them. At some point my soul is going to be more well-traveled than me."

More of these transactions undoubtedly lie ahead, especially in a soft economy, and it would be prudent to heed the lessons of our recent bout of corporate malfeasance. Although government must never impede the free exercise of religion, it has every right to enforce fair accounting practices (how much is a particular soul really worth?) and to monitor the trade in commodities. Some issues will prove thorny. In many religious traditions the separation of body and soul is the very definition of death. What, then, is the existential status of the suddenly soulless? Plato believed that human beings possess three souls; should people therefore be allowed to divest two of them (say, Reason and the Passions) while keeping the third (the Appetites)? Can time-share arrangements be allowed—that is, should one be able to acquire the rights to someone else's soul for two weeks a year? What about leasing with an option to buy?

These are complicated questions. The sex-of-the-soul debate may now be resolved, but the task of theology is far from done. ■

Cullen Murphy is the managing editor of The Atlantic.



OBSSESSIONS

OVERKILL

"I was always interested in animals," says Thomas Venezia, recently the subject of an extensive criminal investigation stemming from his hunting practices. "I always wanted to be near them"

BY JOHN VAILLANT

.....

U ntil January of last year, when a federal judge fined him \$4,500, confiscated \$15,000 worth of his equipment, and banned him from hunting anywhere in the world for five years, Thomas Venezia specialized in bagging waterfowl. Venezia was a hunter and guide in his mid-forties who operated out of Williston, Vermont. A virtuoso with duck calls, decoys, and shotguns, he was able to draw down entire flocks of geese flying a thousand feet overhead. Once the birds were within range, he could kill them with shots that other hunters wouldn't even attempt, sometimes using spectacular, almost instantaneous pivots of his shotgun to dispatch

birds flying toward him, head on. "He's brilliant," says Bradley Carleton, an expert hunter who assisted Venezia on several hunting trips. "No question. His focus is extraordinary. I've never met anyone who was that obsessed."

Because of his obsession, for much of the 1990s Venezia was the subject of a wide-ranging investigation involving local police forces and federal agents from the United States and Canada. Events came to a head in September of 2000, at the start of duck-hunting season, when Venezia went to Saskatchewan for a six-day hunting trip with Richard Perry, a client he had previously worked with and whom he considered a friend. In

fact Perry was an undercover agent for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and what he chronicled during those six days in the field reads like a parody of hunting excess. While watching Venezia kill approximately 350 birds, ranging in size from pigeons to a sandhill crane, Perry documented 230 potential hunting violations. The charges against Venezia included using illegal ammunition, shooting from a moving vehicle, killing protected species, and failing to recover downed birds. According to Perry, during the trip Venezia announced that he had the "K chromosome." "I love to kill," he said. "I have to kill."

After the Saskatchewan trip Perry assembled his data and reported them to Canadian authorities, who arrested Venezia at the U.S.-Canadian border in November of 2000, while he was on another trip engineered by Perry. Venezia was held in jail for a week, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and subsequently pleaded guilty to twenty-four hunting violations. The judge presiding over the case

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found it difficult to contain her disgust and alarm. She fined him \$12,000 (in U.S. dollars) and banished him from Canada forever—the first such punishment imposed on a foreign wildlife offender. During his sentencing Venezia struggled to hold back tears.

Venezia returned to Vermont, where he was living with his wife and infant daughter. During his absence his home had been visited by local and federal wildlife enforcement agents—armed with guns and a search warrant—who were investigating his alleged violations in the United States. They confiscated everything remotely related to their investigation, and Venezia suddenly became news. Ronald Maynard, the head of special investigations for Saskatchewan's Ministry of Environment and Resource Management, summed up many people's feelings about Venezia when he told the press, "this guy doesn't deserve to be called a hunter; he's an affront to every ethic of hunting."

Venezia ran afoul of the law at a peculiar juncture in the history of our relationship with animals. Ever since Magna Carta granted limited rights to British freemen, Western society has been slouching toward an ever more inclusive definition of human, and now non-human, rights. In the past fifty years the change in attitude toward animals has been accelerated by urbanization, which has drawn much of the population away from daily contact with animals (and hunters), and by the environmental movement, which has required us to think and to legislate beyond species just as the civil-rights movement required us to think and legislate beyond ethnicity.

These are challenging times for blood sports. Even trophy hunters are moving toward "green" hunting—shooting game with tranquilizer darts, a practice that lets the targets live to be shot another day. It's an ethical contortion that would have been laughable even thirty years ago, but a lot has changed in a generation—so much that the British Parliament is currently considering a highly contentious bill that would ban the most iconic blood sport of all, fox hunting with horse and hounds.

However, a lot has stayed the same. Today it remains legal to kill any num-

ber of creatures, often for the most whimsical of reasons, despite the fact that animal-rights law is becoming a standard course offering in prominent American law schools and even a professional subspecialty. In New England a hunter can hop, stepping-stone fashion, from "nuisance goose" season (September) to goose and duck seasons (generally October to January) to no-limit crow season (March and April) and on to turkey season (May). Any gaps in this hunting calendar can be filled in with quail, chukar partridge, and pigeon, which are legal much of the year. And those are just the birds.

Hunters give meaning to their sport in a wide variety of ways. One hunter I know kills a single elk each fall and eats the meat throughout the following year. I know of another who will shoot as many geese as he can, gather them into a bloody heap, set his infant son on top, and take a picture. A third told me with heartfelt sincerity that "pulling the trigger is transcendental; it's the desire to become." These three men have little in common other than their passion for the hunt and the fact that they are U.S. citizens fully abiding by current laws.

Thomas Venezia is far from the beer-swilling redneck stereotype of a hunter that many nonhunters are inclined to conjure up. In the spring of 2001 we met at a gas station outside Burlington, Vermont; he arrived in an immaculate gold pickup. He is tall and athletic-looking, with a strong, handsome jaw and brown hair, slightly rumped and laced with gray. He wore glasses over a pair of deeply set brown eyes that gave him a look of disarming gravity and sharpness. We had barely finished shaking hands when Venezia's gaze abruptly shifted skyward. "See those pigeons?" he asked. I turned to see a small flock circling overhead. "Now they're in range." A half second passed. "That one's dead," he said, nodding toward the lead bird. "So's that one." The behavior seemed almost automatic.

Venezia was raised in upstate New York—prime hunting territory, although he was not from a hunting family. "I was always interested in animals," he told me. "I always wanted to be near them,

to push and poke and prod them." A friend's father took him trapping when he was ten, and Venezia got hooked. He trapped muskrats, minks, raccoons, and foxes, and he sold pelts by the hundreds. "I couldn't sleep at night thinking about what was going to be in my traps," he said. "I read a lot and I subscribed to magazines. And I would go and sit down on the bank of a creek and watch." Of waterfowl he asked me, "How does this bird identify the bogeyman?" He then answered his own question: "They're smart, but they're easily exploited by observing their habits. You don't try to change Mother Nature. You try to imitate her."

Venezia worked hard to support his habit. As a salesman for a company that offers "data capture solutions" (hand-held devices used in stores for taking inventory), he had a lot of control over his time. He sometimes conducted business by cell phone from a duck blind. Despite his relentless hunting schedule ("Hunting season never really ends if you're a serious hunter," he told me), Venezia made enough to support his family in a comfortable home and to finance his passion handsomely. Before his legal difficulties he owned five boats, including a floating duck blind built on an Army-surplus barge. His basement, according to a fellow hunter, was an extraordinary place. "It was loaded with deer heads," the hunter told me, "so many that it was like what you'd see in a hunting club where families had been hunting for generations. There were all kinds of guns, and hundreds and hundreds of decoys." When the federal and state agents searched the basement, they took firearms, computer records, photographs, mounted birds, deer heads, and Venezia's collection of "jewelry"—in hunters' parlance the metal bands that scientists attach to the ankles of waterfowl for tracking purposes. Shooting a banded bird is a rare and random occurrence—like winning a kind of avian lottery. As a result the bands are prized by many duck hunters. An avid hunter might collect twenty or thirty over the course of his career; Venezia had more than 300.

In a good year more than 100 million waterfowl migrate across North

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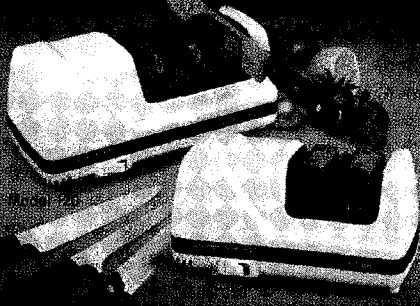
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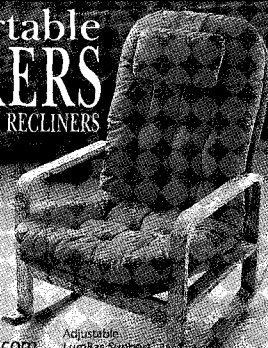
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America (of this number some 20 million will be killed by hunters), and only a tiny percentage of these birds are banded. Robert Rooks, the chief warden for the State of Vermont, explained to me that in order to collect 300 bands "you'd have to shoot *thousands* of birds."

Hunting to excess is practically a New World tradition. European settlers, freshly arrived from a continent in which natural resources had been limited for centuries, were awestruck by what they encountered—seemingly endless forests, millions of buffalo, billions of passenger pigeons. In a letter written from Florida in 1831, John J. Audubon, a forefather of the conservation movement, observed, "The birds, generally speaking, appeared wild and few—you must be aware that I call birds few, when I shoot less than one hundred per day." But by the 1870s many animal populations were in free fall, and hunters were largely to blame. During a trip out west in 1848 Audubon had engaged in the popular sport of buffalo coursing, in which a rider armed with a pistol or a carbine would gallop into a herd of stampeding buffalo and kill them at point-blank range. When the shooting was over, little was taken from the carcasses but the tongues, which were considered a delicacy. Lewis Squires, one of Audubon's companions on that trip, became so enamored of the sport that he begged to stay on after Audubon continued westward. He then killed so many buffalo that he confessed himself "almost ashamed."

But Audubon saw the writing on the wall. "Before many years," he wrote in his *Missouri River Journal* in 1843, "the Buffalo, like the Great Auk, will have disappeared; surely this should not be permitted." It would be three decades before Congress passed protective legislation. By then the U.S. buffalo herd had been reduced to fewer than fifty animals. The passenger pigeon was not even that lucky: it was driven to extinction by a combination of habitat loss and market hunting. During a single month in 1878 market hunters took more than a billion birds from one colony in Michigan.

To say that hunters from earlier eras "didn't know any better" is both naive and revisionist: all successful hunters

have an intimate understanding of their environment. American colonists in Rhode Island demonstrated that understanding as early as the 1640s, by passing a law to protect deer. By the 1700s such restrictions were common along the eastern seaboard, although they were rarely enforced. Like cod fishermen today, Americans who hunted game for profit were relentless until their quarry grew so scarce that pursuing it was no longer remunerative. By the mid-1800s deer, beaver, and wild turkey, to name just a few of the most commonly hunted animals, had been all but extirpated from the northeastern United States. Opposition to the slaughter was growing, however. The urban upper class was spawning sportsmen's clubs organized around the need for restraint—not least because their members had limited opportunities to hunt, and conservation would improve their chances of bagging something. Meanwhile, market hunters were shooting all week long, sometimes with light cannon that could bring down a hundred geese at a time. The clash between the working-class market hunter and the wealthy, politically connected recreational hunter laid the groundwork for the culture of conservation that exists today. It also provides background for understanding the intense hostility that Thomas Venezia engendered in Vermont's close-knit, highly disciplined waterfowling community.

Venezia was a commercial guide in a state that has no guiding tradition. Unlike its neighbors Maine and New Hampshire, Vermont has no licensing or certification requirements for hunting guides—and although the Missisquoi River delta, in northwestern Vermont, boasts some of the finest waterfowling in New England, Venezia was the only person working there as a professional hunting guide. His talents as a salesman were instrumental in both his success and his downfall as a hunter. Like salesmen, serious hunters are deeply concerned with territory. Ideally, they want at their disposal a large area that is attractive to game and inaccessible to other hunters. Public land doesn't always fulfill the second criterion, so an ambitious hunter may try to secure exclusive access

to private land. Leasing private land for this purpose is standard operating procedure in the American South, but it is a relatively new practice in Vermont, one of the few states in which hunting is still considered a right rather than a privilege: all of the state's private rural land is open to hunting unless bans have formally been posted. Leasing arrangements for posted land are often under-the-table deals sealed with cash and a handshake, and Venezia approached them with his characteristic zeal. "Tom is a master negotiator, a master bargainer," Bradley Carleton told me. "He drove the roads and found the fields and got permission like no one you've ever known."

Venezia's persistence paid off. By the mid-1990s he had secured exclusive rights to large swaths of prime hunting land across Vermont and New York. "Other guides and locals were really upset," recalls a hunter who assisted Venezia on guiding trips, "because he would move into areas they were already hunting on, or he'd get on land they'd never been able to hunt."

In the Champlain Valley, which straddles western Vermont and eastern New York, April still qualifies as winter: leafless forests rise like gray stubble over the white hills, and spring feels a long way off. Despite the recent sprouting of McMansions on the farmland around some of the area's bigger towns, the largest manmade structures on the landscape tend to be barns, and many of them are still owned by families who have been working the land for generations.

One local farmer, Bud Bodette, raises cows on the banks of Hospital Creek, in Addison County, Vermont. He has lived in the area for more than sixty years, and has seen a lot of changes. "I used to be a pothunter," he told me one spring. "I hunted to put game in the frying pan. But people look down on that now." Bodette is one of the landowners Venezia paid for hunting rights, and he believes it was Venezia's leasing arrangements, rather than his hunting practices, that drew the sustained attention of state and federal agents. "Tom stepped on a lot of toes—a lot of important toes," Bodette told me. "Game wardens competed for this land too, and they have

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connections. Somebody had to have some clout to have a federal agent on Tom for that long."

Some of the toes that got stepped on may have belonged to Bill Crenshaw, who has been a state wildlife biologist since 1973. Diligent and soft-spoken, Crenshaw is well respected by wardens and hunters alike. He's also a duck hunter and a good friend of Bodette's. For years Bodette had given him permission to hunt a blind on Hospital Creek. In the early 1990s Venezia leased hunting rights to Bodette's land. He invited Crenshaw to stay on, but only if he agreed to share the leasing cost. Crenshaw declined and was forced to hunt elsewhere. "When you're a hunter who's always asked permission and made an effort to have good relations with the landowner," Crenshaw told me, "it stings to lose a spot you've hunted for years."

Fences are built to keep cows in, not to keep neighbors out. So goes a Vermont adage. But Venezia wasn't a native Vermonter, and he didn't behave like one. Loud, brash, and confrontational, he was known for blocking public boat ramps in the dark hours of the morning in order to keep other hunters from getting onto the water before he did. If a hunting party managed to beat him to a coveted spot, Venezia would set up right next to it—a serious breach of hunters' etiquette.

"Vermont duck hunters, as a group, are very courteous and conscientious," Crenshaw told me. "I've been doing this for twenty-eight years, and I got more complaints from more people about Tom than about anyone I've ever known." The list of grievances included driving in people's fields, overbagging, even dispersing clients from his hunting blind and stationing them around parts of Misisquoi Bay with flashlights in the predawn, to discourage competition by making it seem that the area was already full of hunters. And it wasn't unusual for Venezia to shatter the stillness of dawn on the bay with cries like "Lock and load, boys!" or—to the flocking geese—"Come over here and I'll give you the nasty sting of steel!"

The federal officers I interviewed were careful to say that Venezia was pursued so aggressively because he

was breaking the law, but it's clear that this was only part of the motive. "It's really about hunter ethics," Bill Crenshaw told me. "People wanted something done about him." Robert Rooks explained the case a little differently. "To keep citing him for individual infractions would have been ineffective," he said. "The goal of this investigation was to shut him down—to stop him from continuously raping the resource."

This it has done, and more. In losing his hunting license for five years Venezia received the same punishment one gets for accidentally shooting a person in the field. In addition to being fined, put on probation, and required to do a hundred hours of community service, he has been ordered by the court to seek psychological counseling—a first for a federal wildlife offender. Although all of this amounts to stiff punishment, Kim Speckman, the federal agent responsible for assembling the U.S. case against Venezia, believes that for him the hardest part of all was the loss of his "jewelry" collection. "I can guarantee you that the thing that hurt him the most was giving up those bands," she told me.

Venezia has also suffered another penalty, one that small New England communities have always been good at inflicting: he has become an outcast. "He's a social pariah in the outdoor community," Bradley Carleton told me. Mark Farrell, another regular on Misisquoi Bay, concurred. "The shame factor is huge," he said. Venezia appears to be feeling it keenly. "You can't imagine the pressure this is putting on me from all different angles," he told me. "I don't have any pride now. I wish I could run and hide somewhere. I wish I could disappear." He seems to be trying: since his sentencing he has divorced his wife and moved away from the area.

But hunting will always be in Venezia's blood. This became clear to me on the morning we first met, when those pigeons flew overhead. After he drew a bead on them, I asked him what he was seeing. Despite everything he had recently been through, he looked at me and said simply, "Fodder." ❏

John Vaillant lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, where he is working on a book about the logging industry.



MUSIC

MEMORY SPACES

John Adams's On the Transmigration of Souls finds redemption in September 11, and should bring contemporary classical music to a new audience

BY DAVID SCHIFF

.....

It is an oddity of our culture that more people own David McCullough's book *John Adams* than any CD of music by the most prominent composer today, also named John Adams. Twenty years ago Adams seemed poised to lead contemporary art music out of the wilderness. Since that time his large body of work has bolstered Adams's position as the most influential, technically gifted, and aesthetically ambitious composer of his generation. The vibrant rhythms and dazzling orchestration of *The Chairman Dances* (1985) and *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* (1986) have made them orchestral staples, yet his music is less familiar to the public than the work of George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, or Leonard Bernstein. Even though many composers now cultivate an audience-friendly style, new "serious" music remains nearly as marginal as it was during the heyday of academic atonality.

Adams's symphonic works, which at

times sound like Sibelius superimposed on a Eurorock rhythm track, and his two controversial operas, *Nixon in China* (1985) and *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1990), mirror our confused feelings about the function of art music. Indeed, they revel in our ambivalence. But his recent *On the Transmigration of Souls* is a breakthrough. Terrifying and heartrending, it offers reassuring proof that contemporary classical music—too often dismissed out of hand as obscure and unpleasant—has something unique to say to a wide public.

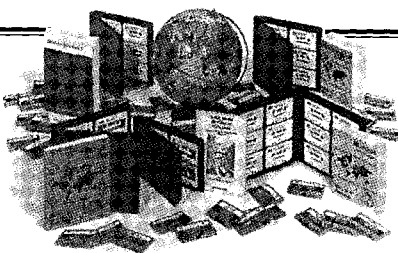
Composers today can get tripped up by contrary expectations. They are told to be mavericks in the hopes that quirkiness will lure bright young listeners from alternative rock. But they are also told to make their music accessible and romantic, in order to reach—or at least not repel—the traditional (and older) concertgoer. What sets Adams apart, even more than his technical flair, is his

ability to heed these mixed signals with a Whitmanesque desire to embrace contradictions. Adams's music contains multitudes of ideas and moods. It is by turns goofy and grave, spiritual and erotic (sometimes both at once), extravagant and severe, profound and sophomoric. No contemporary music can compete with his for sheer beauty of sound—or, at times, for the power to offend listeners.

Adams will be almost unavoidable this year. He has major premieres in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and is the focus of a festival presented by the Great Performers series at Lincoln Center. I can think of no living composer, and few artists in other media, whose work is more informed by the pleasures and terrors, hopes and disenchantments, of contemporary life. His music makes complex ideas vibrate with troubling energy. And like the greatest music of the past—Bach, Beethoven, Mahler—it can take us beyond those troubles and complexities to states of serenity, wisdom, and peace.

Adams, now fifty-six, grew up in New England, and while a student at Harvard he played clarinet in the Boston Symphony. After college he went to San Francisco, where he joined the anti-academic scene of minimalists, including Terry Riley (who launched the movement in 1964 with his ecstatically repetitive and tonal *In C*), and Pacific Rim composers, including Lou Harrison, who while atonal angst ruled on the East Coast continued to write euphonious, tonal music. In the late 1970s Adams found a way to synthesize the styles of the two coasts, and his music has defied critical pigeonholing ever since. Works such as *Phrygian Gates* (1977), *Shaker Loops* (1978), *Harmonium* (1980), and *Grand Pianola Music* (1982) brought minimalism out of the lofts and into the concert hall. He infused a countercultural style with traditional musical ideas it had previously resisted, recasting the repetitious rhythms and simple harmonies of minimalism as virtuoso vehicles for classical performers. Adams had little use for the conceptual rigor or the emotional coolness of earlier minimalism. In the music of Philip Glass or Steve Reich everything you are going to hear appears

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in the first few seconds of a piece. The pleasure comes from observing the barely noticeable process of changes to the initial statement. With Adams anything could happen—and did, explosively. His post-minimalism was romantically transcendental, like the music of Liszt.

Adams also gave the symphony orchestra, that nineteenth-century artifact, a twenty-first-century sound. *Harmonium*, a sprawling symphony for chorus and large orchestra, demonstrated Adams's command of orchestral alchemy. By superimposing layers of instrumental oscillations and pulses Adams made the orchestra shimmer in a way not achieved since Ravel. But the symphony gave the orchestra a metallic, post-industrial sound, far from the traditional lush impressionist palette—like going from oil paint to acrylic. The density of sound (Adams writes thousands of notes) and the emphasis on the bright upper register make the live orchestra seem electronically synthesized, as if from a THX sound system.

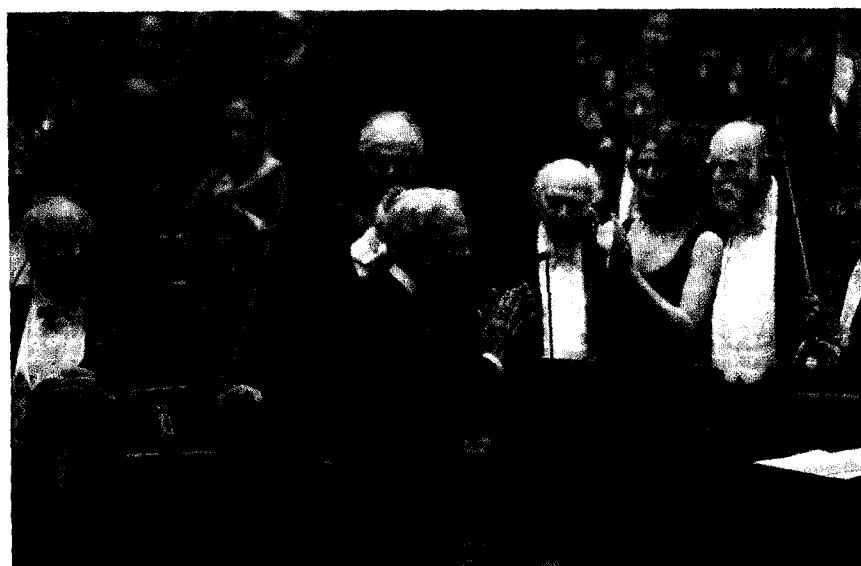
On the Transmigration of Souls, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic to honor the victims of the 9/11 attacks, is a turning point in Adams's work and, I hope, in American music. Adams has described the piece as "a memory space." It superimposes pre-recorded street sounds and the reading of victims' names by friends and family members, also pre-recorded, on live performances by a children's chorus, an adult chorus, and a large orchestra. This complex twenty-five-minute work takes Adams's high-tech sound into a spiritual realm.

Adams's standing made it inevitable that he would be asked to compose a large-scale, highly publicized response to 9/11. Talk about performance anxiety! The Philharmonic must have been anxious about the outcome too. A master of rhythm, texture, and color but not a melodist, Adams was unlikely to produce a simple, lyrical piece like Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, that perfect American elegy. More worrisome, Adams's reputation had been shadowed by the controversy over *The Death of Klinghoffer*, a treatment of the *Achille Lauro* hijacking that many critics found anti-Semitic. (The opera's Palestinians appear to be noble victims; its Jews seem

to have stepped out of an episode of *Seinfeld*.) Soon after 9/11 the Boston Symphony decided to cancel previously scheduled performances of choruses from *Klinghoffer*. Given Adams's leftist, green political positions (not at all exceptional in the East Bay, where he lives), the Philharmonic may have feared that he would exploit the commission to make a musical case for al Qaeda. Adams may only have heightened such fears by telling the press that he had many conflicting opinions about 9/11. But then, didn't everyone?

It is not at all obvious how music, or any other art, should respond to catastro-

Adams could have combined these different elements with such imagination and technical skill. Like many of his earlier works, *Transmigration* speaks in a very contemporary idiom (Adams's pieces often begin by laying down a stylized rock groove in the percussion) that is somehow haunted by a ghost of the musical past. In his great 1984 symphony *Harmonielehre*, Adams channels Sibelius (Fourth Symphony, 1911) and Mahler (Tenth Symphony, also 1911) in the slow movement, whose title, "The Anfortas Wound," brings the ghost of Wagner to the table. Midway through my first hearing of his recent *Naive and*



The composer John Adams and the New York Philharmonic after the premiere of *On the Transmigration of Souls*

phe. Adams's new piece left most critics awed but uncertain of their judgments, and at a loss for words—a loss I felt as I tried to imagine from the reviews what the music was like. Some critics had trouble relating the live to the taped parts of the score; the sound-on-sound texture reminded them, negatively, of movie music. I think the work makes such a powerful impact because of, not in spite of, the "extra-musical" elements; Adams was redefining the relation of music to non-music and of the concert hall to everyday life.

Transmigration does mix sound elements in a way that is unusual in classical music (Steve Reich's *Different Trains* is a precedent) but commonplace in a movie theater. But film soundtracks, of course, do not also feature live performers. Only

Sentimental Music, also a monumental symphony, I became aware that, without allusions or quotations, Adams was following the flight plan of Sibelius's Fifth.

In *Transmigration*, Adams has found a new familiar spirit: Charles Ives. In New York on May 7, 1915, the day the *Lusitania* sank, Ives witnessed an episode of communal mourning that prefigured the response to 9/11. People waiting for the elevated train gradually began to sing along with a hurdy-gurdy playing an old hymn. Ives transformed this experience into "From Hanover Square North, at the End of a Tragic Day, the Voice of the People Again Arose"—a great and rarely performed vision of a spiritualized democracy, a community brought together by music at a time of tragedy.

Adams's *Transmigration* builds on

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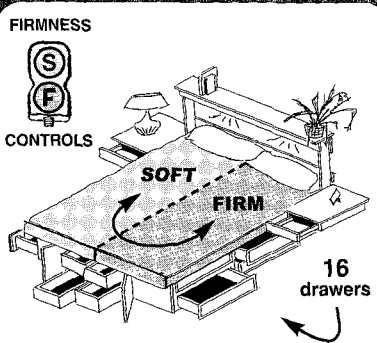
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Ives's vision. For this occasion Adams needed Ives's example to help de-personalize his music. His earlier work is a very up-to-date post-minimalist kind of romanticism, a deeply personal music that seeks states of ecstasy and transcendence. Like a true romantic, he often found his music in dreams, and in his own spiritual conflicts. The "memory space" of *Transmigration*, however, had to be public, not personal, and Ives—uniquely in the history of music—created imaginary utopian venues, usually by layering different sounds. Adams has the advantage of technology: sound engineering to balance and coordinate the musical and extra-musical elements. Technology also allows him to create a music that is at once visionary and familiar. *Transmigration* seems more modernistic than earlier Adams: more disjunct and nondirectional, much more dissonant. Yet, without sounding in any way like popular music—as with the bad old modern music, the work has no memorable musical theme or melody—it is more successfully populist. Its sound-over-sound texture connects it to the mass media. We know this ambiance from Ken Burns documentaries, from CNN, from rap music, from the movies. Like Ives but in an entirely new way, Adams extends our sense of music—there is music in the sound bites and the street noises, music in our own state of sensory overload.

Although the opening of the piece seems like a sound collage, Adams does not mingle noises, words, and tones randomly. He sets them in a careful, therapeutic course from the secular to the sacred, leading to a vision of redemption when the sonic chaos converges to form a vast carillon. First we hear only street sounds, as if the walls of the concert hall had been blown away. In place of Adams's usual percussive groove a taped boy's voice repeats the word "missing," a verbal heartbeat that gives the unformed sound of cars and footsteps a rhythmic undertow. The chorus (at first wordless), strings, and harps enter, playing slowly rocking lines that sound like a medieval chant. Are we in the street, a concert hall, or a cathedral? The choral syllables slowly become stammered words and phrases: "re-mem

... re-mem ... re-member," "you will ... you will ... you nev ...". Noises, words, prayers: for ten minutes the music seems to drift uncertainly and in fragments on memories of Ives's *The Unanswered Question*, in which a distant trumpet poses the eternal question of existence. Over undulating ripples in the woodwinds the children's chorus picks up the gentle rocking lines of the opening with new words that are at once journalism and incantation: "I see buildings, I see water." Without warning the orchestra blasts a sustained chord of anguish, announcing a move to the next level of contemplation. The music becomes simpler. The two choruses repeat the words, now in full sentences, of fathers, mothers, sisters ("The daughter says, 'He was the apple of my father's eye'"), intensifying at the lines "I wanted to dig him out. I know just where he is."

The orchestra again erupts, this time in mounting waves that lead to the long-awaited answer to the question posed by Ives: their voices transformed, transmigrated, into human chimes, the choruses sing out the words "Love" and "Light" over and over, fortissimo. Very gradually the music subsides to the sound-on-sound texture of the opening, but with a new feeling of calm. Orchestra and choruses fade out; a recorded woman's voice, in an unidentifiable accent, repeats the words "I see water and buildings." The street sounds return us to our everyday lives.

In the months that followed the catastrophe, 9/11 became a source more of civic pride than of nationalism. The heroes were policemen and firemen, not soldiers; a mayor, not a President. The names read on television and the short biographies in the *Times* reminded New Yorkers of their diversity and their commonality. In *Transmigration*, Adams breaks down the divide between the high-bourgeois culture that created orchestras like the New York Philharmonic (and the repertory they play) in the nineteenth century and the mass culture that took its place in the twentieth. He has created a music that mirrors and exalts the public wisdom. ■

David Schiff, the composer of the opera Gimpel the Fool (1979) and of Canti di Davide (2001), among other works, teaches at Reed College.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Circular Logic

Answers to this puzzle's Radial clues, which may be six, seven, or eight letters in length, are to be entered inward from the grid's perimeter. The eighth letters, when positioned properly on the line in the middle, will provide an answer to a certain problem in circular logic. Each of the six outer Rings accommodates a sequence of clue answers along with one unclued but fitting entry and one unused letter. The sequence, which proceeds clockwise and whose clues are given in order, may begin anywhere within the Ring. The unused letter (coming from a crossing Radial answer) will always fall between two Ring entries (clued or unclued). The seventh Ring consists of a single unclued word (whose starting point is not given) describing the logical conclusion. Some of its letters are not used by Radial entries; these uncrossed letters and the six unused Ring letters may be circled and read clockwise from twelve o'clock to reveal the character responsible for all this head-spinning logic. Seven clue answers are capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 128.

RADIAL

1. Cryptic, coarse in outline
2. Best using brainwork first off, you idiot
3. A collection of opinions on old Olympian
4. Sort of pencil or pen and piece of paper, by some sort of quirk
5. *Time* article about eastern sea
6. Sumerian city disrupted by certain shark
7. Keep frames satisfactory in color again
8. Most curious cause of sleepiness in Spain? No final answer
9. Culprits altered ring on the face (*two words*)

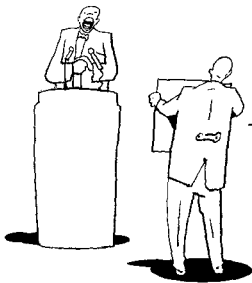
10. Liane's tailored some skirts (*hyphenated*)
11. Glass covers among napkins and such
12. Expose man's wrong in Britain
13. Suddenly, one crackpot has run (*three words*)
14. Hens I let hosts place in a farm structure
15. Puts back some rocks, in pursuit of balance
16. Ominous bit of machinery inside of loud convertible

RINGS

- a. Waterproof aquatic creature
Shook like bolts in a case
Weasel immediately eating goose egg
- b. Chinese gooseberry has edible bulb
Chiron's home page, "Tail of the Cat"
Part of the psyche, for example,
involved in something forbidden
- c. Nutty Stooze attends (*two words*)

- d. Young wildebeests and swan
high above
Silly as one half of a golf course
- d. I attempt packing in time for
travel plan
On the way back, encountered
current article
Once again recognized Marvin
when speaking
- e. Turning form of a lycanthrope, run
Help CIA, playing drunk in
Providence
Guinness stout, possibly cold
- f. Publishes Italian children's author
retrospectively
Audited bags for department store
Service provided by AAA to
political faction

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzleclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

MAUREEN MIGRDTCHIAN, of Mission Viejo, California, writes, "As a teacher, I keep correcting student writing that uses *can not* as two separate words when the student would appear to mean *cannot*. I have seen this mistake in other non-published writing, such as bank letters. Could you please address the difference between 'I *cannot* tell a lie' and 'I *can not* tell a lie'?"

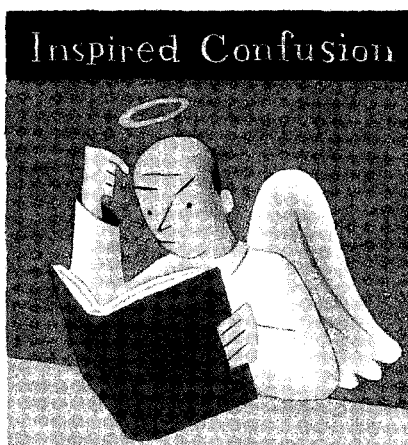
Cannot rules out a possibility; *can not* implies that one has a choice. I take it you don't let your students use contractions. Still, you might tell them that if they can mentally substitute *can't* without changing the meaning, then they should write *cannot*. There is an exception to this rule, though. *Cannot* may turn into two words when the negative statement is being contrasted with an affirmative one: "I *can* cheerfully obfuscate but *not* tell a lie."

CHARLES SPUNGEN, of Highland Park, Illinois, writes, "My wife used the phrase *inspires confusion*, as in 'His music *inspires confusion* in listeners.' I said confusion is not normally a product of an inspirational experience. She said she was using *inspires* in a straightforward fashion, such usage being sanctioned by the eighth or ninth dictionary definition of *inspire*, which indeed suggests that *inspire* can mean nothing more than *cause*. I replied that *sows* or *causes* is better. I pointed out that most definitions of *inspire* (such as 'exert an exalting influence' or 'impel') trade metaphorically on its derivation from *breathe* (albeit in a transitive sense—that is, to animate something by infusing it with vital air). I maintained that even if the metaphor is for the most part forgotten, it lurks just powerfully enough beneath the surface to sow confusion as to how something life-giving (a breath of air) can create something life-muddling (a state of confusion). Naturally, my wife thinks I'm a perfect

ass. This may be true, but I'd like your opinion (well, support)."

It's awfully easy to get carried away with niceties like this, and the language is rife with them. Does a dog have a *personality*, for instance? Is *awfully cruel* redundant?

The living, breathing inspirational connotations of *inspire* might keep me, for one, from joining that word with *confusion*. And, in fact, the combination is unusual, turning up about as often in periodicals as the typo *carful* where *careful* belongs. But some of those few *inspire* (or *inspires*) *confusion* citations



come from such reputable sources as *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Los Angeles Times*. So I wouldn't say that your wife is wrong. It's a matter of taste.

Please don't assume, by the way, that the first dictionary definition for any given word is the primary one. Some dictionaries give obsolete meanings first, and most group related definitions conceptually. Your dictionary's front matter will tell you whether its "eighth or ninth" definition of *inspire* is meant to be less prevalent or important than ones higher on the list.

WILLIAM FRUCHT, of Danbury, Connecticut, writes, "In recent years a number of publications have indulged in

a habitual, almost ritualistic reversal of the familiar *from ... to* sequence. I think this practice started in the business press ("The stock declined yesterday *to* \$.09 *from* \$116.32 in light trading") and spread to other media from there. As a reader encountering such phrases, I often feel I'm being knocked to post *from pillar*. Can you help discourage such awkwardnesses before things go *to worse from bad*?"

You're not the only person to have written me about this seeming trend. Most of the citations I've found that illustrate it are indeed from the business press. Surprisingly, in the media in general the likes of *increasing to* and *decreasing to* are actually more common, respectively, than *increasing from* and *decreasing from*. But after most of these *to* phrases no *from* ever turns up, so the sentences give no cause for complaint.

Language doesn't promise to present events or ideas in chronological order, but when it brings us things in reverse chronological order, as *to ... from* tends to do, the writer or speaker ought to have a good reason and provide ample signposts to make clear what he or she is doing. Otherwise, as you've neatly demonstrated, the result can be disorienting. Some people who write *to ... from* imagine, I think, that they are calling attention to the word that comes first. And maybe they are in a sentence like your hypothetical example, which concludes with a bland prepositional phrase. Still, "The stock declined in light trading yesterday *from* \$116.32 *to* \$.09" would be an improvement, because as usage authorities are fond of pointing out, ordinarily the most emphatic place in a sentence is the end.

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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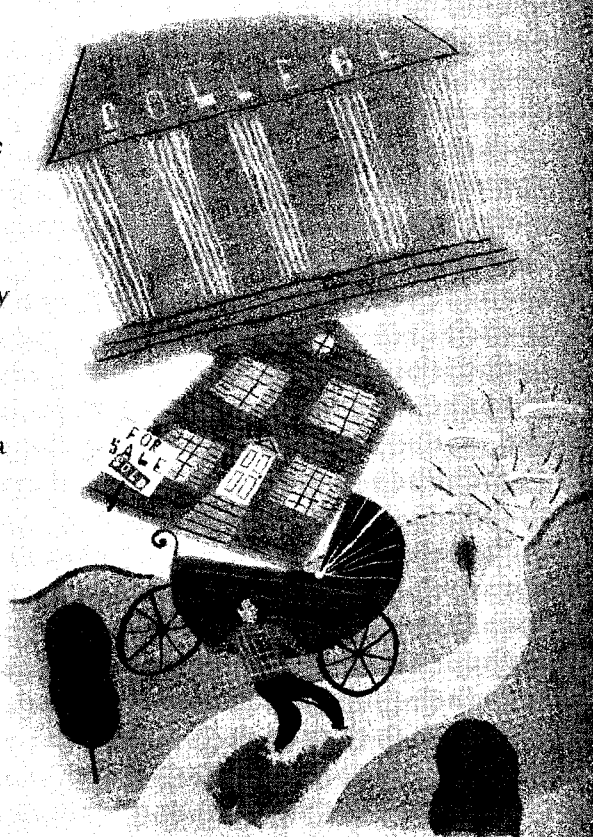
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